

# Arabic and Persian Seals and Amulets in the British Museum



Venetia Porter

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With special assistance from  
Robert Hoyland and Alexander Morton

With contributions from Shailendra Bhandare,  
and scientific analysis by Janet Ambers, Sylvia  
Humphrey, Nigel Meeks and Margaret Sax

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# Foreword

In this catalogue are gathered more than 800 seals, sealings and amulets inscribed in Arabic and Persian. They range in date between the early Islamic period (c. eighth–tenth centuries AD) and the twentieth century AD, and come from all across the Islamic world from Egypt to India. Thanks to modern technology, all are represented in colour photographs, which makes it much easier to read the inscriptions.

The seals published here were acquired by the British Museum at various dates between 1753 and 2003. At the core of the Museum's holdings in this area are large groups of seals from Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753) and Henry Christy (1810–1865), whose private collections were bequeathed to the nation, and the French nobleman Louis, 2nd Duke of Blacas (1815–1866), whose collection was purchased by the British Museum in 1866. The Museum has also benefited greatly from generous gifts of Islamic seals by other collectors, all of whom are gratefully acknowledged in the catalogue. Very few of the seals and amulets included here are from archaeological excavations but, as has been pointed out in the Introduction, excavated seals are uncommon. In the absence of archaeological documentation, however, care has been taken to give as much information as possible about provenance. For example, one seal (Cat. 183) does not come from an archaeological excavation, but it is noted in the catalogue that it was collected in Mesopotamia by the great nineteenth-century archaeologist, Sir Henry Layard.

It is gratifying that the Islamic seals and sealings are now out in the public domain, complementing the *Catalogue of Early Islamic Glass Stamps in the British Museum* by A.H. Morton that appeared in 1985. These seals can now all be studied in the context of related collections. As described in the Introduction, some of the early

Islamic seals derive from Sasanian period prototypes or may be compared with contemporary Byzantine seals, examples of which have long been available for study in the British Museum. Thus, the Sasanian seals were published by A.D.H. Bivar in 1969, and Byzantine seals were included by O.M. Dalton in his magisterial *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities in the British Museum* (1901). The collection of Byzantine lead seals previously in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum and now in the British Library was published even before that, in 1898 by W. De Gray Birch (*Catalogue of Seals in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, Vol.5). At the same time as the work on Islamic seals, steady progress has been made with the publication of the pre-Islamic seals from the Middle East. Since 1962, seven volumes in the series 'Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum' have appeared, and two more are in course of preparation.

Users of this catalogue will be much indebted to Dr Venetia Porter, Curator of Islamic collections in the British Museum, who in spite of many other responsibilities has found time to prepare this volume. She now joins the ranks of the other distinguished scholars who have made the Museum's seal collections available, and she is to be congratulated on a fine achievement. In the latter stages of this work Dr Porter had assistance from Louisa Macmillan, and Josephine Turquet has provided invaluable editorial input.

**John Curtis**  
**Keeper, Department of the Middle East**  
**The British Museum**

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The idea to do this catalogue came from Michael Rogers. It was he who introduced me to the subject when I first joined the British Museum and first taught me to love Arabic epigraphy and seals and we spent many happy hours working together on this collection in the preliminary stages of this catalogue. It was Ludvik Kalus' pioneering work on the subject of seals that provided the model of how to catalogue this material, and I am particularly indebted to my good friends Annabel Gallop, whose own remarkable work on Malay seals has been a great inspiration, and Emilie Savage-Smith who has been a wonderful mentor on the subject of amulets and all things magical.

Over time I have had excellent advice, support and good conversation with many other colleagues, friends and seal and amulet enthusiasts. These have included Abdullah Ghouchani, Javad Golmohammadi and Manijeh Bayani-Wolpert for some of the Persian seals, Derek Content who introduced me to rock crystal amulet-seals, Michael Macdonald, Jonathan Bloom and Sheila Blair who helped in my struggles to understand these complex objects and much else besides. The lead seals were particularly challenging but fortunately the late Nicholas Lowick had provided a number of the readings and I am indebted to Chase Robinson, Nitzan Amitai-Preiss and Stefan Heidemann for their insights into the subject and

for their help on individual seals. G. Rex Smith, Moshalleh al-Moraikhi, Muhammad al-Thenayian, Ahmad al-Zayla'i, Ali al-Sheikh and Qahtan al-Abeed were all helpful in connection with the Arabic seals; Andrew Petersen, Tim Insoll and Seth Priestman on some of the archaeological seals; Anne Regourd and Constant Hamès invited me into their 'cercle magique'; James Allan was extremely helpful in terms of the Shi'a seals and amulets and John Seyller helped a great deal with the Indian seals section. Other encouragement and assistance was also provided by Julia Shotlander, Shelagh Weir, Julian Raby, Charles Burnett, Anatoly Ivanov, Muhammad Isa Waley and Colin Baker.

In the stages of preparation, I am grateful to a number of people who helped in a variety of ways: Souraya Noujaim-Le Garrec and Tara Ja'far who typed in a lot of the Arabic, and Nina Shandloff who first took this on as editor, as did Kirsti Wagstaff later. Within the museum I am grateful to many colleagues who have supported and helped with this project over the years, Jessica Rawson, Robert Knox, Sheila Canby, Joe Cribb, Andrew Burnett, Vesta Curtis, Paramdip Khera, Shahrokh Razmjou, Richard Blurton and John Curtis in particular.

One of the benefits of taking so long to finish this catalogue has been the change in technology. When I started, we were to have illustrations in a block in black and white at the back of the book. Now it has been possible to integrate the images in colour next to the entries and the beauty of these tiny complex objects can be fully appreciated. Many of the photographs were taken by Ivor Kerslake and Jacob Ravn. These are difficult objects to photograph and I am hugely grateful to them and to Ann Searight who did the drawings. Despite all efforts there will undoubtedly be mistakes and for these I am entirely responsible. Again, however, thanks to modern technology, these can be rectified when the paper catalogue can be accessed online by 2012 to join the other research publications.

**Venetia Porter**  
**The British Museum**  
**1 February, 2011**

***For Charles, Emily and Rhiannon***

# Introduction

What we know about seals, seal making and practice, both from the extant material and the documentary sources, is the following. In early Islam, clay seals were used on Arabic papyri from as early as the seventh century. Lead and bronze seals were used for a variety of purposes, such as proof of payment of the poll tax; some were attached to documents, sacks or other receptacles. After about the eleventh century, lead and clay sealings seem to fade from use, and our next body of evidence for a study of seal practice is seal impressions on paper from the Mongol period in the latter part of the thirteenth century, probably reflecting the influence of China. From this time, seal impressions are found on paper on Safavid, Mughal and Ottoman documents and manuscripts of various kinds.

The seal matrices themselves are made from a variety of gem stones or metals, and many thousands exist in public and private collections.<sup>1</sup> The early seals, from about the eighth to the fourteenth century, generally do not bear dates, nor is it generally possible to identify them with known individuals. Either they are engraved with simple phrases which act as a kind of motto, known as an *'alāma*, or they are inscribed with brief names whose owners can be rarely identified historically. An exception to this is a rare rock crystal seal in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, engraved *yathīq billāh al-'aẓīm/Fahd b. Ibrahīm*. The person named has been identified as the chief scribe during the reign of the Fatimid caliph al-Ḥākim who died in 1006.<sup>2</sup> For the later period – from about the fifteenth to the twentieth century – the main difference is the frequent appearance of dated seals, opening up the possibility that their owners might eventually be identified.

This Introduction falls into two parts. The first covers seal practice in the Byzantine and Sasanian worlds and assesses their influence on early Islamic seals. Seal practice in the early and later Islamic period in different levels of society is described on the basis of both the literary evidence and the evidence provided by extant seals. Following this, the role of the seal and the *'alāma* or motto, the use of figural representation on the seals, seal engravers and the forgery of seals are discussed. Finally, a number of seals and amulets from archaeological sites are examined.

The second part of the Introduction deals with the features of the seals themselves, in particular the palaeography and dating of early Islamic seals, some grammatical features of the inscriptions, and the range of designs present on the seals. The types and form of Islamic names, the range of phrases that commonly appear and the characteristics of later seals are also discussed.

## Seal practice in the Islamic world

### Terminology

The principal word for seal in Arabic is *khātām*. Ibn Manẓūr (d.1311–12), author of the dictionary *Lisān al-'Arab*, describes

*khātām* (from the verb *khatama*) as 'that which is placed on clay', and *al-khitām* as the clay which is used to seal documents (*kitāb* is the word used for a document) (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 12: 163). Although Ibn Manẓūr was writing some time after the actual practice of sealing documents with clay seals had been abandoned, the meaning clearly reflects early use. The definition later grew to encompass a number of associated meanings and in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (EI), *khātām* is defined as follows:

... seal, signet, signet ring, the impression (also *khatm*) as well as the actual seal-matrix; it is applied not only to seals proper, engraved in incuse characters with retrograde inscriptions, but also in the very common seal-like objects with regular inscriptions of a pious or auspicious character... which are amulets and further distinguished from seals by the absence of a personal name... indeed anything with an inscription stamped upon it may be called *khātām*. (Allan, 'Khātām', EI<sup>2</sup>)

The engraved stone or bezel of a ring is usually called *faṣṣ*,<sup>3</sup> while the verb *ṭaba'a*, to stamp, is also used in a number of contexts.<sup>4</sup> The term *dīwān al-khātīm*, or just *khātīm*, also covers the Office of the Seal in early Islam, particularly during Abbasid times (Sourdel 1959: 597). In Persian the term for seal is *muhr*, used in Iran and India, and in Turkish it is *mühür*. In Safavid Iran the *muhrdār* was the Keeper of the Seal and worked within the Chancellery (Floor 2001: 68).

### Byzantine practice and influence

Balādhurī, in his *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Balādhurī 1956, vol. 3: 566), states that when the Prophet Muḥammad wished to write to the Byzantine Emperor, he was told that the Byzantines would only read the document if it bore a seal. There are thousands of extant Byzantine seals, mostly in lead,<sup>5</sup> although gold, silver and wax were also used.<sup>6</sup> As will be shown in the discussion of Islamic lead seals below, there are extremely close parallels between the Byzantine lead seals and the Islamic examples in terms of style and technique of manufacture.

### Islam: the Prophet's seal

The Prophet Muḥammad's seal (*khātām*), according to the *Ḥadīth*, was made entirely of silver, both the bezel (*faṣṣ*) and the ring itself. He is said to have discouraged the use of gold for seal rings (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 12: 164; Balādhurī 1956, vol. 3: 566). Another source says that the Prophet's seal was made from a thin sheet of metal and that its *faṣṣ* was agate (*ḥabashiyan*).<sup>7</sup> Ibn Manẓūr attempts to explain this: 'Ibn al-Athīr says it is possible that he wanted either onyx (*jiz'*) or carnelian (*'aqīq*), because its mines were in Yemen and Ethiopia (*al-Ḥabasha'*).<sup>8</sup> Mas'ūdī (d.956) states that he adopted the seal in 7/628, having realised the need to respond to letters such as to the Byzantine Emperor referred to above (Soucek 2002: 243; Mas'ūdī 1894: 259). On his ring was engraved the phrase 'Muḥammad is the Prophet of God'. The Prophet's ring was used (*khatama bihi*) by



the Rightly-Guided Caliphs Abū Bakr, ‘Umar<sup>9</sup> and ‘Uthmān. The last of these is said to have lost it down a well midway through his caliphate, after which he took another ring and added the same inscription engraved on three lines (Balādhurī 1956, vol. 3: 567).

### The *dīwān al-khātim*: the ‘office of the seal’ and the Sasanian legacy

Following the conquest of Iraq in 637, the Muslim conquerors inherited sophisticated systems of administration from the Sasanians which were to provide a useful framework from which to create their own centralised bureaucracy. This was achieved by the early governors, in particular Ziyād ibn Abīhi, governor for the caliph Mu‘āwiya (661–80) between 669 and 673. Ziyād introduced a Sasanian-style chancellery system and with that a department which used seals to register documents. The system they followed was the well-established Sasanian one (described further below) in which the ruler’s order was recorded by a registrar and copied and both copies sent to the *ṣāhib al-zimām*, who was responsible for having the documents sealed. The sealed copies were stored in the registry. The early Muslim governors used seals with figural designs on them (see below) and Ziyād is described as ‘the first Arab to institute a *dīwān zimām* and a seal in imitation of “what the Persians used to do” for sealing documents’ (Morony 1984: 66–7).

### Sasanian royal seals

The most extensive information on the Sasanian royal seals comes from Mas‘ūdī’s *Murūj al-dhahab*. Khusrau I Anushirvān (531–79) possessed four seals in different materials: a seal for the revenue (*kharāj*), of which the bezel was a red hyacinth (*yāqūt aḥmar*) which shone like fire and was engraved with the word ‘justice’ (*al-‘adl*); a seal for the estates department (*ḍiyyā*), of which the bezel was a turquoise and was engraved with the word ‘development’ (*al-‘imāra*); a seal for the council, of which the bezel was a deep blue hyacinth (*yāqūt kuḥlī*) engraved with the word ‘deliberation’ (*al-ta‘ānnī*); and a seal for the postal service, of which the bezel was a red hyacinth (*yāqūt aḥmar*) which shone like fire and was engraved with the word ‘equity’ (*al-wafā*).<sup>10</sup>

A fuller account of the seals of Khusrau II Parvīz, who had nine seals, includes such information as the use of a diamond seal for despatches and decrees and a note of particular phrases such as ‘prosperity is achieved by wealth’ and ‘joy and happiness’, while on a seal of Bahrām V (421–39) was the phrase ‘thoughts are enlarged by deeds’ (Bivar 1969: 31–2).

The use of clay seals is well attested in Sasanian Iran. The hoard of 505 clay sealings from the fortress of Qaṣr-i Abū Naṣr, dateable from the late Sasanian to early Islamic period, with one sealing bearing an Arabic inscription, and now separated from the objects to which they were affixed, were shown to have been pressed onto or attached to documents or packages with cord. Additional marks suggest that the stones used were probably set into rings. The inscriptions on them indicate that the seals were personal as well as official (Frye 1973: 42ff.).

Although the early Muslims are likely to have used different seals for different purposes, as did the Sasanians, the sources are much less clear about this, and tend to mention one phrase per caliph. The system established in Basra by Ziyād led to the establishment of a *dīwān al-khātim* in Damascus, where, as in

the Sasanian system, copies of letters or documents were made while the original was sealed and sent off (Balādhurī 1956, vol. 3: 569; Duri, ‘Dīwān’, EI<sup>2</sup>). The need for this office, it seems, was recognised by Mu‘āwiya when an unsealed document for a transfer of 100,000 dirhams was changed to 200,000; the sealing of documents could protect against this kind of fraud (Morony 1984: 68). The *dīwān al-khātim* continued as a separate administrative entity well into the Abbasid period, when it was combined with the *dīwān al-rasā’il* (the Office of Correspondence) during the reign of the caliph al-Muqtadir (908–32).

Sourdel in *Le Vizirat ‘Abbāside* describes the vast numbers of documents that were copied and sent out with the caliph’s approval and stamped with the royal seal (Sourdel 1959: 597). These documents were made of paper, which began to be used extensively during the early Abbasid period. It was reputedly in 794–5, under the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, that the first paper mill was established in Baghdad (Bloom 2001: 48). Unfortunately these early documents do not survive, but many of them undoubtedly bore seals. Hilāl al-Ṣābi’ (d.1056), a secretary to the Abbasid court writing in the eleventh century, discusses the seals that were used in caliphal correspondence and writes as follows: ‘The seal was made either of ambergris and musk, or of black clay mixed with ambergris’. In an interesting insight into seal practice he remarks

as for the letters of investiture starting with ‘what *fulān* has entrusted to *fulān*’, they did not have to be sealed because they were not addressed. If sealed, the seal was to be at the end. I have not, however, seen any seals at the end of letters of investiture. Most of the seals that I have seen in the provincial correspondence and caliphal letters of instruction have been in a silver loop with a silk tassel. (al-Ṣābi’ 1977: 103)

Returning to the early Abbasid period, Sourdel indicates that the caliphs clearly had both a seal for official letters and a personal seal, and it was the latter that the caliph entrusted to his confidants. Hārūn al-Rashīd, for example, is said to have given his personal seal to his trusted servant Yahyā while at the same time entrusting to him control over the *dīwān al-khātim* (Sourdel 1959: 137–8). When the caliph al-Muktafi (902–8) became ill, his eunuch Ṣāfi removed his personal seal and gave it to the vizier: dreadful intrigues ensued (Sourdel 1959: 365). That the seal was a publicly recognised emblem of office can be seen by the fact that along with the rod (*qaḍīb*) and the staff (*‘aṣā*) it was one of the badges of rank handed over to the new ruler on taking office from the Umayyad period onwards (Sourdel, ‘Ḳaḍīb’, EI<sup>2</sup>).

### The relationship between Sasanian and early Islamic seals

In Sasanian Iran, where seals were used by rulers, officials and by private people in their daily affairs, there are substantial numbers of seals and sealings that have been documented and provide a useful basis for comparison with the Islamic seals. They fall into two different groups: those with the name of an office and a city or province, and the more personal ones with a name and title, sometimes combined with an image or with pious phrases on their own (Frye 1973: 47–65; Soucek 2002: 244–5). The relationship between Sasanian and Islamic seals, studied by Gignoux and Kalus (1982), is clear not only in terms of seal practice but in a number of specific other ways, with clear evidence of continuity in both the content of the inscriptions and the style. In particular, late Sasanian seals, like

the Islamic ones, often contain pious phrases with reference to God but without names by which to identify the owner (these may be a form of *‘alāma*, discussed below). Gignoux and Kalus conclude that, while the deities that are being prayed to are different, the sensibilities, the tone of the requests and the structure of the sentences are the same. What is also striking in terms of ornamentation is the use of the star and crescent on both the Sasanian and the early Islamic seals (see **Table 2**) (Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 151 and e.g. nos. 00.16 and 00.18). Ancient Near-Eastern symbols representing the sun and moon Gods, these motifs are found on Sasanian coins and are carried through into Umayyad copper coins and glass stamps (Pinder-Wilson 1987: 379). They appear on seals predominantly, but not exclusively, in conjunction with simple angular inscriptions. On coins these ornaments continue intermittently well into the tenth and eleventh centuries, appearing on Buyid coins of Oman and c. eleventh-century East African coins (Lane Poole 1876, vol. 2: 654; Brown 1996: 374).

The connection between Sasanian and early Islamic seals is emphasised still further in two ways. First, there are many Sasanian seals which have additional Arabic inscriptions in angular script (Bivar 1969: 123). Secondly, in terms of shape, a number are cut *en cabochon* (**Table 3**), a shape commonly favoured for Sasanian seals, and in one case at least (**Cat. 36**), there is a strong possibility, judging by its dome-like form, that this is a Sasanian seal that has been cut down.

### Seals of the caliphs as described by medieval authors

The inscriptions on the seals of the Islamic caliphs are enumerated by various medieval authors: Mas‘ūdī in *Kitāb al-Tanbīh* and Ibn ‘Arabī in *Muḥāḍarat al-Abrār* note the words on the caliphal seals at the end of sections on the caliphs’ lives, while Qalqashandī lists them as a single block (Qalqashandī 1913–18, vol. 6: 354–5). Many of these references have been gathered by Gignoux and Kalus (1982). The medieval authors use the phrases *‘wa nuqisha khātimuhu ...’* (‘and his seal was engraved’) or *‘wa kāna naqsh khātimihi ...’* (‘and the inscription on his seal was’) *‘al-mulk lillāh’* (‘the kingdom belongs to God’), *‘al-‘izza lillāh’* (‘glory belongs to God’). The various authors do not always concur, however, on the texts engraved. For example, according to Mas‘ūdī, the seal of the caliph Mu‘āwiya b. Yazīd (683–4) was engraved *‘billāh thiqaṭ Mu‘āwiya’*, while according to Qalqashandī his seal read *‘al-dunyā ghurūr’* (Mas‘ūdī 1894: 307; Qalqashandī 1913–18, vol. 6: 354; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 144). Either the stories got muddled up as they were passed from one author to another or the caliphs had more than one seal. The only author to distinguish between official and private seals was Hilāl al-Ṣābi (d.1056). He says that the ‘caliphal ring’ is that which reads ‘Muḥammad is the Prophet of God’ on three lines. ‘Other seals’ he writes, ‘are engraved as desired’. The engraving on the private ring of Abū Bakr was: ‘How excellent is the mighty Allāh’, and he goes on to enumerate the others until ‘Alī, after which he says ‘engravings on the seal rings differed greatly’ (al-Ṣābi 1977: 103–4).<sup>11</sup>

Many of the phrases found on the caliphal seals, as listed by the medieval authors, are, as we have seen, legends of a pious nature which occur in a number of other early Islamic contexts, such as coins or graffiti on rock.<sup>12</sup> Very rarely do they include particular names of caliphs. Exceptions to this are those of some of the later caliphs: al-Muṭṭaḳī (940–44), for example, had his

seal engraved *‘al-Muṭṭaḳī lillāh’*, and similarly al-Mustakfī (944–46). In the case of the seal of caliph ‘Alī, which was inscribed *‘al-mulk lillāh’* by his scribe ‘Abdallāh b. Abī Rifā‘ī, the legend, and others like it, can be said to belong to the category of *‘alāma*, a motto which took the place of a signature on documents from at least Abbasid times (Stern 1964: 123–66, and discussed further below). The context would have been the key factor in the identification of the royal seal, and the use of particular phrases by caliphs or notables may have set trends for people needing seals in a private capacity.

### Early Islamic lead and bronze seals: form and function

The extant early Islamic lead sealings, of which comparatively few have survived, are single- or double-sided; some have cloth marks on the back, and many have string canals through which some kind of wire would have been threaded. As with Byzantine seals, the parallels with coins are evident particularly where they are double-sided, and there are often close similarities in the arrangement of the inscriptions (Morrisson 1987: 1–25; see also ‘Parallels between coins and seals’, below). Like the Byzantine examples, the Islamic lead seals were probably made with *boulloteria*, iron instruments in the shape of pincers or tongs, the inner ends of which would have been engraved like coin dies. With the aid of a hammer they would have been used for striking double-sided seals (Zacos and Vegler 1972; Morrisson 1987: 7; Cheynet 1997: 112; Spink 1999, lot 227).

To my knowledge, no Islamic *boulloteria* are known, but it may be that, like coin dies which rarely survive, they were either discarded because they were no longer serviceable or were deliberately destroyed.

Regarding the seals with cloth marks on the back, there are Byzantine parallels for these as well, and they are unlikely to have been struck with *boulloteria*. It may be that regular metal dies as for coins and glass stamps were used for these.<sup>13</sup>

As to their function, the seals were clearly produced for a variety of purposes, of which one is as receipts for the poll tax (*jizya*) (Cahen, ‘Djizya’, EI<sup>2</sup>). The poll tax was a tax imposed on non-Muslims (*dhimmīs* or *ahl al-dhimma*) in the early Islamic period, and there are enough textual references to indicate that seals were used in the collection of this tax, the earliest recorded evidence being from the first two decades of the eighth century. Sources also indicate that seals were attached to the neck, a subject recently studied by Chase Robinson (2005; see below). For example, in the context of the tax assessed in Iraq during the reign of ‘Umar I (634–44), those sent to portion out the land for taxation said ‘the one who does not come to us so that we can put a seal upon his neck, from him the *dhimma* [i.e. protected] status will be abolished. Then they were assembled and they sealed their necks and distributed their stipends’ (Lokkegaard 1950: 139).

This practice was also clearly alive in the Jazīra, as is remarked on in the Syriac chronicle of 819: ‘Maslama sent officers throughout Mesopotamia (al-Jazīra) to measure lands, make a census of vineyards, plantations, livestock and people and to hang leaden seals on everyone’s neck’ (Palmer 1993: 79). In an early Arabic poem by Bashshār ibn Burd (d.783) the poet compares his love to a seal on a *dhimmī*’s neck: ‘Love for her has set a seal on my neck, in place of a *dhimmī* seal’ – in other words implying that ‘the slavery of love is comparable with the inferior

status of the *dhimmī*’ (Beeston 1977: 20; Robinson 2005: 401).

In his important recent study of sealing in early Islam, and in particular the practice of placing seals on the necks of *dhimmīs*, Robinson (2005) compares this way of physically differentiating the *ahl al-dhimma* from Muslims to the pre-Islamic practice of marking defeated enemies by branding or tattooing. Thus, he suggests, the placing of seals on the neck was a gesture intended to humiliate. The connection between collecting the *jizya* tax and the wearing of neck seals is well documented. However, one of the questions Robinson has sought to clarify is whether neck sealing went beyond fiscal matters and was used as part of a generalised policy of stigmatising the *dhimmīs*. His conclusion on the basis of textual evidence is generally affirmative, as in many cases the descriptions of ‘sealed necks’ appear in the aftermath of conquest and associated with other humiliating practices such as the cutting of forelocks (Robinson 2005: 417).

What is not straightforward on the basis of the extant seals is how the poll tax seals worn around the neck may be distinguished from other seals. In general terms, poll tax seals should ideally show a string canal and traces of wire and include in the inscription the words *jizya* or *jāliya*, the latter a term which, although it originally meant ‘fugitive’, became synonymous with the term *jizya* (Cahen, ‘Djizya’, EI<sup>2</sup>; Balog 1979: 128). It was Walker who first described two bronze seals bearing the dates ‘94’ and ‘95’ (712–14) and inscribed *min ahl miṣr* (from the people of Miṣr), as poll tax seals worn round the necks of *dhimmīs* (Walker 1956: 295; **Cat. 9**). Robinson rightly questions this on several grounds: firstly he suggests that it is too early for *jizya* sealing, which seems not to have been current practice until several decades later – in addition to the fact that lead, not bronze, is always mentioned in that context. More importantly, however, he adds:

unlike the unambiguous *jizya* sealings that record the city or district of the tax payer... it is hard to see how these could have functioned in administrative terms: *min ahl miṣr* is only meaningful as a form of identification outside Egypt .... In fact nothing in the sealings’ legend is incompatible with alternative interpretations, viz. that they were attached not to people but to bags, trunks or sacks; and it may also be that the formula *min ahl miṣr* refers not to *ahl al-dhimma* but to the Arab-Muslim army (*ahl* – that is, the ‘people’ listed in the *ḏiḡwān*) which was garrisoned in Egypt. (Robinson 2005: 424–5)

Of the other lead seals in the British Museum, other possible candidates as poll tax seals (whether worn around the neck or not), which have parallel examples published by Stickel (1866; 1867; 1895) and Casanova (1894), are a group which include the specific reference to the *jāliya* of al-Karaj and al-Burj and bear the names of Dulafid amirs of the Jibāl in the ninth century, sometimes with the name of the Abbasid caliph as well (**Cat. 28–31**). Another example in the collection (**Cat. 17**), dated 258/871–2 and inscribed ‘twelve’ on one side may also be a poll tax seal, the numeral referring to twelve dirhams. This was one of the three most commonly used *jizya* rates in the Abbasid period.<sup>14</sup> Other seals from Sicily (e.g. **Cat. 13**) are of a type published by Balog (1979), which bear dates and the names of Aghlabid amirs. In Balog’s view, these were unequivocally the seals of *dhimmīs* for particular years and worn around the neck. However, although there seems little doubt that these were tax receipts of some kind, it seems a step too far to suggest that all seals bearing dates were neck sealings.

Other lead seals, in the British Museum collection and elsewhere, clearly had a whole range of administrative functions, some of which may have been connected to the collection of the land tax (*kharāj*), although the inscription rarely provides any real clue. There are a number of early seals in the names of Umayyad caliphs. One in the name of the caliph Hishām (724–43) simply states ‘the servant of God Hishām, commander of the faithful’ (Casanova 1894: 99). Another example, in the name of the caliph Marwān II (744–50), was probably the seal of a *muhtasib*, the executive in charge of weights and measures in the market (Amitai-Preiss 1997: 238). A third in similar style is a seal of the Spanish Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Rahmān I (756–88) (Ibrāhīm 1995: 143–5).

Other seals mention names of Abbasid caliphs, sometimes in conjunction with an executive. There are place names mentioned on late Umayyad or early Abbasid seals, such as *ard filasṭīn*, and terms such as *kūra* and *iqṭīm* (discussed below), denoting different types of administrative districts. An indication from the objects themselves also suggests varied use, some with holes in the back and clearly having once been attached to something such as a document. Soret, in his description of the lead seals acquired by Bartholomäi in Hamadan in 1858, says he was told that these were once attached to documents (Soret 1859; see below). As already mentioned, there are clear signs of cloth marks on the back of some of the British Museum seals, which may indicate that they were attached to sacks. Mas’ūdī tells a grim and possibly apocryphal story about the people of Isfahan whose punishment, on refusing to pay their taxes, was that the governor cut off the heads of a number of the miscreants and placed them in sacks which were then sealed. Understandably, the remainder gave in and paid the necessary amounts (Casanova 1894: 98; Mas’ūdī 1928: 393).

Lead seals are not known beyond the eleventh century; the latest published example belongs to one of the Kakwayhid rulers (Casanova 1894: 117). It is likely, therefore, that as proofs of payment they were replaced by paper receipts, examples of which are found in the Geniza documents (Balog 1979: 5–7; Goitein 1971: 384). In fact, lead seals do not reappear again until the Ottoman period, very much later, and these were most often post office seals (Edhem 1904: 54–70).

### The study of lead seals

Lead seals began to be published in the late nineteenth century. Gustav Stickel was the first to analyse and discuss this material, producing a series of articles in the collection of the coin cabinet of the University of Jena (Stickel 1866; 1867; 1895). More recent work on this important collection has been carried out by Stefan Heidemann and Claudia Sode (1997 and 2000). Paul Casanova (1894) assembled a corpus of seals using the lead seals in Jena and two French collections, that of Clairemont-Ganneau, which included the important seal of the Umayyad caliph Hishām, and the Drouin collection, which appears to have ended up in Istanbul. The Drouin pieces were re-published in the catalogue of the Musée Impérial Ottoman in 1904 by Halil Edhem. Brief references to lead seals in other collections include the seals in the Rainer collection of papyri in Vienna, which include two lead seals (Karabacek 1894: 177; Soucek 2002: 253). Many of the Eastern Islamic lead seals had been acquired in Iran by a Russian general resident in the country, Iwan Alexejewitsch Bartholomäi (1813–70) (Heidemann and Sode



1997: 42ff.; Soret 1859: 321). He acquired a group associated with the ninth century Dulafid rulers of the Jibāl in 1858 near Hamadan. These were later distributed among Soret and others, ending up in various collections across Europe. The British Museum examples were bought from Julius Richard in 1861 (see below, ‘The British Museum collection’, and **Cat. 28–31**).

### The terms ‘*kūra*’ and ‘*iqḷīm*’

‘*Kūra*’ and ‘*iqḷīm*’, terms which appear on a number of seals, are different types of administrative district. However, this simple statement is complicated by the fact that the terms are used by geographers in different ways and sometimes appear interchangeable. In general it seems that in Syria and upper Mesopotamia, the term ‘*iqḷīm*’, which can be translated as ‘region’, denotes a subdivision of the *kūra*, meaning a district (Miquel, ‘*Iḳlīm*’, EI<sup>2</sup>). Ibn Khurradādhbih uses ‘*iqḷīm*’ in two senses. His section on Homs (*Ḥimṣ*), for example (Ibn Khurradādhbih 1889: 75ff.), is entitled ‘*aqālīm Ḥimṣ*’, the *iqḷīms* of Homs. Within this large area are numerous *iqḷīms* – Hama, Shayzar and others – and these are subdivisions of *kūras* such as Bulnīnās (as on **Cat. 12** below). These *kūras* and the *iqḷīms* together make up the *aqālīm*. This relationship between the *kūra* and the *iqḷīm* is corroborated by the Nessana papyri; for example, people of Nessana are addressed as of ‘the *kūra* of Gaza, of the *iqḷīm* of al-Khalūs’ (Kraemer 1958: no. 60).

Further evidence is given by documents of sale of land in Syria. A document written in 320/922 (Sourdel-Thomine 1965: 169) states: ‘This is what has been bought by al-Ḥusayn b. ‘Ubayd b. Muḥammad b. Abī Rajā’ the Jewish cloth merchant. He has bought a piece of land comprising the territory (*ard*) of the village (*qarya*) of Ḥaradān (east of Damascus) in the *iqḷīm* of Dā’iyain the *kūra* of the Ghūṭa of Damascus’. Sourdel-Thomine notes, however, that there is fluctuation in this term, and that Ibn Khurradādhbih refers to the Ghūṭa of Damascus sometimes as an *iqḷīm* and sometimes as a *kūra*. In another document published by Sourdel-Thomine (1972: 285 and 289) are found the terms ‘*iqḷīm*’, ‘*kūra*’ and ‘*jund*’, the last of which refers to a military district: for example, ‘lands in the *iqḷīm* of al-Sanamayn in the *kūra* of al-Buthayna in Jund Dimashq’, and, later, ‘the *iqḷīm* of Qabalyas in the *kūra* of Ba’albakk in the *jund* of Damascus’ (Sourdel-Thomine 1972: 290) (Sourdel, ‘*Kūra*’, EI<sup>2</sup>; Miquel, ‘*Iḳlīm*’, EI<sup>2</sup>).

Other geographers define the *iqḷīm* as a region or province, with the *kūra* as a district within the *iqḷīm* (Sourdel, ‘*Kūra*’, EI<sup>2</sup>). For example, in a tentative reading, Rayy is referred to in seal **Cat. 18** as a *kūra*. Presumably in this context it denotes the administrative district of Rayy.

### Seals on Arabic papyri and clay discs<sup>15</sup>

It is the caliph ‘Umar I (634–44) who is credited with being the first to date documents and stamp them with clay, although no examples survive from this period. This was in the context of his attempts to address seriously the administration of the wide span of territories now under the sway of Islam. He was the first to establish a *dīwān* on the Persian model, which was basically a public register of receipts and expenditures (Hitti 1970: 172).

The papyrus documents were rolled, fastened and sealed, the seal generally breaking off when the document was opened. The term used for the clay is ‘*qirqis*’; according to Ibn Manẓūr (1994, vol. 6: 173) this was a word of Persian derivation,

although Noldeke believed it to be derived from Aramaic (Allan ‘*Khātam*’, EI<sup>2</sup>). From the seals which survive it is clear that they were generally placed by the person writing the document, or else, as shown by papyrus documents from Afghanistan studied by Geoffrey Khan, the seals bore the stamp, or sometimes thumbnail mark, of witnesses (Khan 1994: 36). One of these documents states explicitly that both witness and the man drawing up the document set their seal to it.

The type of inscriptions on the clay seals are quite different from those of the lead seals discussed above. The earliest surviving seals attached to Islamic-period papyri are figural. The best known is on a letter in Greek, dated to the equivalent of 643, sent by the Commander of the Muslim army in Egypt ‘Amr b. al-‘Ās, to an Egyptian official (Karabacek 1894: 136; Wassiliou and Harrauer 1999: 28–30; Soucek 2002: 247). The seal bears the image of a bull. Figural seals are discussed further below. Far more common, however, and as attested from papyri dated between the eighth and tenth centuries from Egypt, are seals with Arabic inscriptions – generally names, sometimes with a short benedictory phrase (Karabacek: 1894: 133–7; Wassiliou 1999: 33–40). A seal still attached to a papyrus document in the Khedival Library in Cairo states simply on two lines: ‘My lord is God’ (*Allāh rabbī*)<sup>16</sup> and ‘‘Abdallāh’. Fortunately we know from the document that this same ‘Abdallāh is seeking a permit from the finance director of Egypt, ‘Ubaydallāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb (725–34).<sup>17</sup> Without the context of the document, ‘Abdallāh would have remained unknown.<sup>18</sup> This example is relevant to the numerous other extant seal matrices which have similar phrases with names attached: when combined with the documents, the identity of the owner is revealed. What we cannot be certain about, however, is whether they were using carnelian or other hardstone seals for the purpose of sealing papyrus documents, or whether metal – of which many examples exist – would have been cheaper and more efficacious. Probably all types were used and the choice was simply a matter of status and affordability.

A hoard of 47 clay seals published in the Zucker collection catalogue (Kalus 1987a: 353–61) provides us with further examples of the types of inscriptions used and some indication about seal practice. The storing of seals also occurred earlier, as is shown by the find of Sasanian clay sealings at the fortress of Qaṣr-i Abū Naṣr mentioned above (Frye 1973: 42ff.). Found together in a clay vessel in the Hebron hills, the Arabic seals are believed to have been attached to documents; some show traces of string while others show marks that suggest that the documents were made of papyrus. They include nineteen examples from one matrix. The phrases inscribed belong to the same repertoire of inscriptions as on the early seal matrices: for example, the phrase *al-Walīd ḥasbuhu Allāh* (‘God suffices al-Walīd’; Kalus 1987a: 356, no. 1), which parallels the British Museum group beginning at **Cat. 257**, or the phrases with *tawakkul* (‘reliance’; Kalus 1987a: 356, no. 2), which parallel **Cat. 247–251**. This therefore confirms that the early seal matrices are the type of object that would have been used to stamp papyrus documents.

### Clay tokens or receipts

In the British Museum collection is a group of inscribed clay disks (**Cat. 1–7**) stamped with angular inscriptions on one side and sometimes bearing a thumbprint on the other side. Undated,

this group probably belongs to the Umayyad or early Abbasid period. Their purpose is not yet clear, however. They may have functioned as receipts in the same way that some lead seals may have done, or they may have served as tokens of some kind. A parallel for the use of tokens – copper not clay, however – exists in a Byzantine context. In the sixth century, it was stated that Constantine bestowed on the citizens of Constantinople grain tickets which could be exchanged for loaves of bread (Nesbitt 1987: 68).

### Personal seals: literary references

The ubiquitous use of seals from the beginning of the Islamic period right up to the nineteenth century can be demonstrated by the following three texts from different periods and regions of the Islamic world: the tenth century *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*; the account of the seventeenth-century traveller to Persia, John Chardin, and E.W. Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, his account of Egypt during the nineteenth century.

The *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* is a manual in the '*belles lettres*' genre of Arabic literature on how refined people (*ẓurafā'*) should behave, what they should wear, and what they should say (Raven, 'al-Washsha', EI<sup>2</sup>). Included here are phrases that such people should engrave on seal stones (Washshā 1907: 132–5; Washshā 2004: 210–18). The author Muḥammad ibn Ishāq begins with some Sufi rhyming phrases, many of which contain references to God, the Prophet Muḥammad or Imām 'Alī (Washshā 1907: 132; Washshā 2004: 210), and some of which have parallels with extant seals (Cat. 335). In another section the theme is love. The first is about a certain Ḥasan b. Wahb who had fallen in love with a slave girl called Nā'im (meaning 'soft and gentle'). He inverted the letters of her name and engraved the name Ma'ān instead, then wrote the following verse (Washshā 1907: 134; Washshā 2004: 217):<sup>19</sup>

I engraved the name Ma'ān on my ring so I could free myself from my oppressor [obviously someone who disapproved of his liaison]. This was a name which troubled my heart and I became greatly distressed by it so I inverted the letters [the spelling] and announced it in this way so as to be more discreet.

Another story concerns a certain Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Malik who was in love with a slave girl. When he abandoned her she engraved words of rebuke on her ring. On hearing about this, Muḥammad engraved on his ring words countering hers. This story was rendered into a poem as follows (Washshā 1907: 134; Washshā 2004: 218):

She wrote on the bezel of her ring, 'Whoever tires of his lovers will go into a deep sleep.' I wrote on my ring so that she would hear of it, 'The one who sleeps is not aware of the one who is sleepless.' She erased the inscription on her ring and wrote, 'The one who loves neither sleeps nor even gets sleepy,' and in reply I wrote, 'By God I am the first to die of grief.' She then wrote, 'I shall not speak at all to the one who opposes me with his ring!'

The next two passages, from much later texts, are concerned more with practicalities and tradition. John Chardin, the French Protestant chevalier who resided in Persia between 1664 and 1670 during the reign of Sulaymān I (1666–94), describes the main features, purpose and function of not only Safavid but Islamic seals more broadly (Chardin 1811, vol. 5: 454ff.):

In my opinion everyone knows that the Orientals are not in the habit of validating acts with signatures as we do in the west. This is neither practised nor is even known with them. They place their

seal or signet in the place where we would put our name. It must not be thought that it is easy to take their seal, as they wear it hanging from their neck by a silk cord between their undershirt and their robe, only taking it off in the bath. Neither must it be thought that the seals are easy to counterfeit. On the contrary it is very likely that it happens far less than the forging of signatures. Other people wear a seal on their finger in the form of a ring. These seals are usually agates or carnelians, oval or square, the size of a denier, on which is engraved their name or a sentence from the Qur'ān, as the Orientals do not use what we call heraldic arms. Sometimes the inscription on the seal is a line or two of verse instead of a name.

The following passage was written by Edward William Lane in the nineteenth century (Lane 1981: 40–1):

On the little finger of the right hand is worn a seal-ring, which is generally of silver, with a carnelian, or other stone, upon which is engraved the wearer's name. The name is usually accompanied by the words 'his servant' (signifying 'the servant or worshipper of God'), and often by other words expressive of the person's trust in God etc.... The seal-ring is used for signing letters and other writings, and its impression is considered more valid than a sign manual. A little ink is dabbed upon it with one of the fingers, and it is pressed upon the paper, the person who uses it having first touched his tongue with another finger and moistened the place in the paper which is to be stamped. Almost every person who can afford it has a seal-ring, even though he be a servant.

### Figural representation on early seals

Ibn Manẓūr refers to a report attributed to Ibn al-Athīr regarding the attitude to the use of figural seals at the time of the Prophet.

It said that the wearing of a seal with figures (*ashbāh*) is only permitted to rulers if they wear it for decoration only and do not use it for stamping documents. In the report, a man came to the Prophet wearing a figural seal, and the Prophet said, 'Do I not get from you the smell (*rīḥ*) of idols?' (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 12: 164).

As is clear from the sources and surviving Arabic papyri still with their seals attached, figural seals were commonplace into the eighth century (Soucek 2002: 249). As was noted above, the commander of the Muslim armies 'Amr ibn al-ʿĀs (d.c. 663) had a seal in the form of a bull stamped onto a document of 643 (Wassiliou and Harrauer 1999: 28). In Iraq, although there was clearly no objection to figural representation on seals, there seems to have been some debate over whether Arabic inscriptions should be engraved on administrative or personal seals. The caliph 'Umar is said to have objected to the use by 'Utba ibn Farqad, governor of Mosul in 641, of a seal engraved "'Utba the *ʿāmil*'. This seems to suggest that inscribed seals at this juncture were the prerogative of the caliph. As already noted, Ibn Hilāl, writing in the eleventh century, mentions that 'the caliphal seal ring was inscribed 'Muḥammad Apostle of Allah engraved on three lines' (al-Šābi' 1977: 103). This would explain why Ziyād ibn Abīhi, for example, governor of Iraq, had a seal with a figure of a peacock (Morony 1984: 67).

The coinage reform of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik, affecting gold dinars from the year 77/696 and subsequently silver and copper coins, signified a change in regard to the appropriateness of the representation of living creatures in an official context. From this date onwards, the gold and silver coins are, with few exceptions, purely inscriptional. However, it appears to have taken some time for the ban to be implemented. There also seems to be a grey area between what was considered official or unofficial, particularly exemplified by post-reform copper coins, which do not always adhere to the rule (Walker 1956: 201ff.). As

regards seals, the continued use of images is clear from a lead seal in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum excavated near Haifa, which combines the name of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik (685–705), Qur’ānic passages, and images of birds and lions (Soucek 2002: 248; Artuk 1952: 21–5), and a document dated to 710, from Qurra ibn Sharīk, the governor and finance director of Egypt (709–14), whose seal had an image of a wolf (Karabacek 1894, vol. 2: 593; Wassiliou and Harrauer 1999: 30).

We also have the evidence of the continued use in the Islamic period of Roman, South Arabian, Indo-Greek and Sasanian seals, all of which bear images, and these have not been obliterated. A number of them have Arabic inscriptions in angular script, either added to the image or inscribed on the back (Cat. 364–367). In the British Museum collection of early seals other than the re-engraved seals, there is only one example of a figural seal (Cat. 358); from the post-medieval period, figural seals are much more common (see, for example, the nineteenth-century brass seals Cat. 523ff.).

### From the tenth century: the ‘*alāma* and ink seals

Until we reach the Ilkhanid period the situation regarding the use of seals is not entirely clear. Surviving Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk petitions published by Stern from the collection of St. Catherine’s monastery in Sinai do not bear seals of any kind, but for authentication rely on the ‘*alāma* (Stern 1964: 123f.).<sup>20</sup> The ‘*alāma* was a form of signature that corresponded not to a name but to a phrase or motto inserted in a particular place on a document. Its use is known from at least the tenth century. The Fatimid caliphs, for instance, all used the phrase ‘*al-ḥamd lillāh rabb al-‘ālmīn*’ (‘Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds’), while their viziers used the phrase ‘*al-mulk lillāh*’ (‘The kingdom belongs to God’) (Stern 1964: 127ff.).<sup>21</sup> However, evidence that seals were used in the Fatimid period is clear from the extant rock crystal seal of Fahd b. Ibrāhīm, chief scribe during the reign of al-Ḥākim (*Trésors Fatimides* 1998: 140, no. 85).

Various questions are raised by this. How did the use of an ‘*alāma* correspond, if at all, with the use of a seal? Can we assume that the early Muslims substituted seals on documents for the ‘*alāma* at a certain point, perhaps once they had gone from papyrus to paper? Were only certain documents sealed? Stern’s essay ‘The signature’ in his *Fāṭimid Decrees*, which is a survey of the subject resulting from a study of Islamic documents from all periods, only once links an ‘*alāma* with a seal. The sixteenth-century Sa’dian *sharīfs* of Morocco ‘impressed the ‘*alāma* by a stamp’ (Stern 1964: 142). What is interesting is that the same pious phrases, ‘*al-mulk lillāh*’, ‘*ḥasbī Allāh*’, continue in use as ‘*alāmas* regardless of period, paralleling their continued use on seals. It must have been the case that the ‘*alāma* and the seal varied at different times as the principal means of authenticating a document. The Saljuqs, it has been suggested, validated documents with a combination of ‘*alāma*, *tamgha* (Turkic tribal symbol) and ruler’s name (Stern 1964: 144). That the Saljuqs used seals is indicated by the *Dastūr-i Dabīrī* in the account of a description of the functions of the provincial overseer (*mushrif*), which says that his tasks included ‘to keep himself informed of what went on in the mint and concerning seals (*muhr*), coins (*sikka*) ...’ (Lambton 1968: 259). No Saljuq documents survive from which this could be ascertained, however.

An interesting anecdote concerning seal practice in the

fourteenth century is told by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa upon his entry to Damietta in 1326.

No one who enters the city may afterwards leave it except by the governor’s seal. Persons of repute have a seal stamped on a piece of paper, which they show to gatekeepers; other persons have the seal stamped on their forearms and must show that. (Gibb 1958, vol. 1: 36)

The earliest documented ink seals are from the thirteenth century. Richard cites an example on a document from Egypt c. 1250 (Richard 2005: 336) and ink seals were frequently used by the Mongols. As Rogers has noted, ‘the seal was used to authenticate not only the whole document but, by being applied to the joins of separate pages which were glued together to make a scroll, were to prevent substituted or interpolated texts’ (Rogers 1997: 188). An example in the Soudavar collection is on a firman of the Mongol sultan Gaykhātū (1291–95) and dated 692/1292. The document has been sealed in several places with a Chinese red ink seal. Soudavar argues that this was Gaykhātū’s seal of investiture and differs from other seals of the period which are in Arabic. Written in a form of angular Kufic in a square, the disposition of the square Kufic of these Mongol seals, which is also seen in the architecture of the Ilkhanid and Timurid periods, may be derived from Chinese seal script. This style continues on seals well into the fifteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

From about the fifteenth century, under the Timurids, a round seal, often a green stone – nephrite, for example – was popularly used. An important jade seal dateable to the mid-fifteenth century in this style, is in the Soudovar collection and is inscribed in the name of Pir Budāq (d.1466) with the phrase ‘Verily God commands justice and goodness’ (Soudovar 1992: 129). A nephrite seal, pear-shaped in form, in the Hermitage, St Petersburg, is inscribed with the name of Gauhar Shād (d.1457), wife of Tamerlane (Loukonine and Ivanov 2003: 169). The seal of Tīmūr (1370–1405) bore the emblem of the three circles in the form of a triangle that is seen on his coins, and de Sacy records an impression of Tīmūr’s seal on a document in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (de Sacy 1822, vol. 6: 516–19). It is from this period that seals bearing dates start to appear (see Cat. 450–559).

### The Safavid period: seal impressions, royal and personal seals

Once into the Safavid period, we enter an era in which seals are used extensively, and where, for a thorough study of seal practice as well as the style and content of seals, three different kinds of evidence need to be considered. They are: the seal impressions on paper (documents, manuscripts, miniatures and album pages); the seal matrices themselves, and the accounts of the use, particularly of royal seals, in administrative texts such as the *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* (Minorsky 1943) and the ‘calligrapher’s manual’ (a manuscript in the library of the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, see Morton 1970), in which details of chancery practice including the use of seals are discussed.<sup>23</sup>

On firmans and other official documents, royal seals with the names of the Safavid or Qajar monarchs are prominently placed above the text, sometimes set into a decorative cartouche. On the backs of the firmans often appear the seals of officials in the administration. An important collection of Safavid and Qajar firmans in the British Library acquired in 1895 (collection



OR 4935) contain all of these elements and bear the seals of Shāh Ṣafī, Shāh ‘Abbās and others (Busse 1959). These documents are extremely informative about the types of seals used by the rulers for different purposes and the longevity of royal seals in use, as the dates on the document and the dates on the seal rarely coincide. On an Ilkhanid document the seal predates the document by a century (Soudavar 1992: 80). But this is an extreme case. On Safavid documents, for example in OR 4935, the firman in the name of Shāh Ṣafī bears his seal which is dated 1038/1628 and the document is dated 1039/1629 (Rabino di Borgomale 1945: pl. 48: no. 8), so this particular seal had only been in use for a year, while a document in the name of Shāh ‘Abbās dated 1018/1609 has a seal dated 996/1587 showing that this seal had so far been in use for 22 years (Christies 1997, lot 83).

Chardin’s description of the use of the seals of Shāh Sulaymān I (1666–94) is highly informative as it describes how many seals were in use at any one time; it parallels the description of Mughal seals in the *A’īn-i Akbarī* of Abū’l Faḥl (1869, vol. 1: 54–5 discussed below) and, interestingly, echoes the description of Persian royal seals from Sasanian Iran referred to above.

Chardin describes five royal seals used by Suleymān I and draws four of them. He describes the different materials from which they were made, which included turquoise, ruby and emerald. He discusses their different shapes and the different purposes for which they were used. ‘The great seals (*les grands sceaux*),’ he writes, ‘were engraved on thick turquoises which had been used since the time of Abbas the Great; all that has been done is to erase the name of the deceased king and the date’. He describes: a round seal with a lobed top for affairs of state (*dīwān-i mamālīk*), treaties, correspondence with foreigners and so on; a rectangular seal used for matters relating to the crown lands (*khāṣṣa*); two seals for financial matters with bearing on the *khāṣṣa*; and a seal for military matters. He adds that the square seal is the most important as it is regarded as the ruler’s own seal since he wears it around his neck, as did his ancestors (Chardin 1811: vol. 9: 461 and atlas pl. xxxi).

In terms of the history of the study of this material, an early work on the subject was by Rabino di Borgomale in the section on royal seals in his album *Coins, Medals, and Seals of the Shahs of Iran* (Rabino di Borgomale 1945: 22ff.). His principal sources included the British Library firmans (OR 4935), firmans which were part of the correspondence in the Vatican regarding the Carmelite Mission in Persia (*Carmelites* 1939), State papers in the Public Record Office, and various other archives. For the context, he relied upon John Chardin’s description of Shāh Sulaymān’s five seals and the Safavid manual of administration the *Tadhkirat al-Mulūk*. Research into this subject has been taken further by Renate Schimkoreit in a recent and exhaustive analysis which provides a corpus of royal seals based on a wide range of Safavid documents and decrees.<sup>24</sup> The most recent work on the Safavid administration is by Willem Floor and includes wide-ranging discussion of the types of documents sealed, the different types of seals with which officials in addition to the Shāh were allowed to seal documents, where the seals were kept and so on (Floor 2001: 64–77).

Seal impressions are frequently to be found on manuscripts and individual album pages. These consist of royal seals, seals of librarians, and seals belonging to other owners, sometimes

artists’ seals. They can be very important for what they tell us about the history of the material since its production: how individual manuscripts were treasured and passed down, and, more particularly, by whom. A remarkable example is the Royal Asiatic Society’s *Shāhnāmeḥ* of Muḥammad Jūkī, produced in Herat c. 1444, which entered the Mughal library. It bears the seal, dated 906/1501, of Bābur (1526–30), who probably acquired the manuscript in Samarqand and, in addition, seals of all the Mughal emperors up to Awrangzīb (d.1707) (Morton 2010).

Correlating extant seal matrices with seal impressions on paper would be a fruitful area of research and could in addition help to ascertain the provenance of many of the seal matrices. It is only recently, however, that work focusing on the seals stamped onto manuscripts has begun. In the Vever collection catalogue the seals on the manuscripts feature as a useful appendix (Lowry 1988: 395–7). John Seyller, in an important article highlighting the marginal notes on the flyleaves of Mughal manuscripts, which detail provenance, value, when they were examined and so on, also deciphers the seals included among the marginal notes (Seyller 1997: 280–346).<sup>25</sup> Francis Richard, in an important contribution to the study of codicology, discusses the seals on manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, many of which were once in the libraries of sultans such as Shāh Rukh (1405–47) and others (Richard 2005: 335–44).

The seals belonging to this period in the British Museum collection and elsewhere are not royal seals. According to contemporary accounts, royal seals were generally destroyed. Chardin recounts that at the death of ‘Abbās II orders were given, that

they should go and deface the name of ‘Abbās out of all the seals and signets of state, which are all of precious stones, which were brought in a purse sealed up with the Prime Minister’s seal, and that the name of Ṣafī should be engraved in the room of the other. That if in any of the seals the name of ‘Abbās could not be conveniently erased, that the engraving should be entirely taken away, to make room for another inscription, or if the pieces were so thin that they could not endure defacing, that they should be broken to pieces, and new stones engraved. (Chardin 1811, vol. 9: 500; Rabino di Borgomale 1945: 24)

However, it is clear that some survived. A rock crystal seal belonging to Tahmāsp (Falk 1985: 102, no. 67) corresponds in shape and general content of the inscription to the rectangular seal mentioned by Chardin among Sulaymān’s five seals. It contains a Shī‘ī devotional verse in the name of Imām ‘Alī in cartouches, with ‘Allāh’, ‘Muḥammad’ and ‘‘Alī’ around the sides and bearing the date 963/1555–6. In the centre is the phrase common to royal and other Persian seals, *banda-i Shāh-i wilāyat Tahmāsp*, servant of the King of Holiness – that is Imām ‘Alī. Another surviving royal seal of Abbās II was published by Pope.<sup>26</sup> An emerald seal of the Qajar monarch Faṭḥ ‘Alī Shāh (1797–1834) dated 1238/1822–3 and engraved with his name and the phrase ‘*al-‘izzatu lillāh*’ (‘glory to God’) is in the Khalili collection. An impression from it appears on a letter to the Shāh’s Head Treasurer, and Raby has suggested that this is likely to have been a personal seal, contrasting with a seal impression from a different seal, more formal in its inscription, that includes the words ‘*az shafāqat-i khusrawānī*’ (by royal favour) (Raby 1999: nos. 101 and 133). The existence of these seals and perhaps others raises the question as to how widespread the practice of destroying the royal seals actually was. A series of royal Qajar seals are in the Gulistan Palace

Museum, Tehran. It is possible that it was considered sufficient to damage them slightly rather than destroy them completely. A likely example of this is a surviving rock crystal seal of Crown Prince ‘Abbās Mirzā (1789–1833), dating to about 1214/1799, which is chipped in two corners, rendering it unusable (Raby 1999: no. 99). An interesting contemporary parallel for the destruction of royal seals can be offered by the practice in Iran today: senior ‘*ulamā*’ and *sayyids* use seals to authenticate opinions and these are broken when they die.<sup>27</sup>

The second body of evidence for the study of seal practice is the seal matrices themselves. In public and private collections are to be found numerous seals made of carnelian, chalcedony or other materials from the Safavid period, including a significant number that are dated. The vast majority of them are seals of private individuals, government officials, librarians and others. Dates on the extant seals and particular phrases establish them as falling into the Safavid period and later. For example, in the British Museum collection there are over 60 seals dated between 986/1578–9 and 1281/1864–5, and a further number of dated brass seals (Chapter 7). Added to these are many others which we can assume by association to be Safavid period from Iran and later, but the possibility that some could be from Turkey or Islamic India cannot be discounted.

### Indo-Muslim seals of the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries<sup>28</sup>

The period c. 1600–1900 saw the establishment and subsequent decline of the Mughal Empire in India, the political reassertion of indigenous ruling elites as the Mughal Empire fragmented and ultimately, the British colonial conquest, which was accomplished through diplomatic and military means. The collection of Indian seals of this period in the British Museum is important therefore and significant as it sheds light on aspects such as administrative history, the structure and running of the Mughal and successor bureaucracies, and, in the case of certain individuals, their status, parentage and patronage.

Authentication was the chief function of these seals and they were used on a wide range of administrative, fiscal, judicial and personal papers. The following remarks use the group of seals catalogued here as a basis for a broader discussion of the subject.

The use of seals as a means of identification and validation in India dates back to the Indus Valley civilisation period (c. 3500–2000 BC) and Indus seals made of steatite and bearing inscriptions in an undeciphered pictographic script need no introduction to enthusiasts of Indian proto-history (for a detailed discussion, see Parpola and Joshi 1987). In the Indian epic *Rāmāyana*, Hanuman the monkey god, acting as a messenger on behalf of Rāma, the hero, presents Sita (Rāma’s wife, who was abducted and confined by the demon king of Sri Lanka) with a ring bearing his seal, to convince her of his identity and genuine intent. A very large number of seals bearing attributive inscriptions made from varied materials such as metal, glass, ivory and semi-precious stones are known from archaeological explorations and excavations spanning the Indian subcontinent, and so are terracotta sealings bearing impressions of such seals. Detailed studies from a regional standpoint have been done by Pierfrancesco Callieri (1997), Devendra Handa (1985) and K.K. Thaplyal (1972).

Once we leave the early historic and early medieval periods however, and enter the Indo-Islamic period (c. 1200 onwards),

the picture changes dramatically. Although a large number of documents bearing seal impressions are known and have been published,<sup>29</sup> especially from fifteenth century onwards, few seals have been published.<sup>30</sup> From the documents bearing seal impressions, it is clear that a very specific system of making and using the seals was in existence (Joshi 1972) and most administrative and correspondence documents were stamped with one seal, sometimes two. The seal of the originator of the correspondence or the creator of an administrative document is impressed at the beginning and a seal indicating there is no more to be written is impressed at the end of a document. While the function of the first seal was to authenticate or legitimise the document, the latter was to ensure no unauthenticated writing was added at the end of it. The first seal was therefore almost invariably nominative in its inscriptional details while the last did or did not bear a name in its inscription; it merely stated that its impression would mark the termination of the written contents of the paper.

An insight into the functioning of this system is offered by the *Ā’in-i Akbarī*, a treatise on various administrative matters, including fiscal and judicial aspects, written during the rule of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Akbar, the third Mughal emperor (1556–1605) by Abū’l Faḥl, his trusted minister. Extracts from his work on the description of how the system of fixing seals to documents functioned were collected by S.K. Bhatt and M.K. Gupta (2000) and also by M. Mohiuddin (1971).

According to Abū’l Faḥl, three branches of the government employed the use of seals: the revenue, military and general administration including the judiciary. He refers to a seal by the Persian word *muhr* and indicates that all representatives of Akbar’s government, including the provincial heads and officers below them, had their own seals. They were prepared and issued through a dedicated administrative department. Their standard form was to keep the name of the reigning monarch at the top and their own names at the bottom sometimes with an appellation such as ‘*murīd*’ or ‘*banda*’. In the absence of a proper seal, the document was not deemed to be authentic. There was also a protocol involving the ways in which the seals could be applied to a document – first the document was made into several folds, beginning from its lower end. On the first fold, at a place towards the edge where the paper was cut off, the *vakīl* would put his seal. Opposite, but a little lower the *munsif* (judge) of the *dīwān* (court) would place his seal, in such a manner that half would go on the second fold. The *ṣadr* (officer) would put his seal a little lower and the officer of the *diwān* would put his last of all (Abū’l Faḥl 1869, vol. 1: 273–4).

The emperor would always place his seal above the ornamented portion of the letter or order (firman), which usually would mean that it was stamped above the text with which the letter began. No one except the emperor and prince of a royal bloodline could place his seal in this place on an official document. The seals were impressed using an indelible liquid made from the juices of the Bhela nut (‘marking nut’ or *Semecarpus anacardium*) or lac, a natural substance, both of which can be rendered plastic with heat so that a small amount could be added on to the paper. While it was soft, the seal was impressed upon it, removed and the impression left to cool. Upon cooling, the seal impression would form a hard crust, thereby sealing the folded document. To apply seals at the beginning and the end of the document, they were dipped in ink

and stamped; small amounts of absorbent material like sawdust would be sprinkled upon the impression and wiped, to take care of excess ink and also to aid rapid drying (Abū'l Faḡl 1869, vol. 1: 54, n. 2).

The *Ā'in-i Akbarī* also provides useful information about Akbar's own seals and gives the names of the following seal engravers (Abū'l Faḡl 1869, vol. 1: 54–5; Felix 1916: 687–9):

1. Maulānā Maqṣūd of Hirāt, one of the servants of Humāyūn, who writes well the *riqā'* and *nasta'liq* characters. The astrolabe, globes, and various *miṣṭars*, which he made, were much admired by people of experience. The patronage of his Majesty perfected his art.
2. Tamkīn of Kābul. He was educated in his native country, and brought his art to such a perfection as to excite the jealousy of the preceding engraver, whom he surpassed in the *nasta'liq*.
3. Mīr Dost of Kābul. He cuts both the *riqā'* and *nasta'liq* characters in cornelian. He does not come up to the preceding artists. His *riqā'* is better than his *nasta'liq*. He also understands assaying.
4. Maulānā Ibrāhīm. In the art of cutting cornelians he is the pupil of his brother Sharaf of Yazd. He surpasses the ancient engravers; and it is impossible to distinguish his *riqā'* and *nasta'liq* from the masterpieces of the best calligraphers. He engraved the words *la'l jalālī* or the glorious ruby, upon all imperial rubies of value.
5. Maulānā 'Alī Aḥmad of Delhi who, according to all calligraphers, stands unsurpassed as a steel-engraver, so much so that his engravings are used as copies. His *nasta'liq* is charming; but he writes also other characters as well. He learned the trade from his father Shaykh Ḥusayn, studied the manner of Maulānā Maqṣūd, and eventually surpassed all.

One of the most famous of Mughal royal seals was the genealogical seal and is the subject of an important work by Annabel Gallop (Gallop 1999 and see also Felix 1916). It consisted of a central circle which contained the name of the ruling emperor and around it, a number of smaller circles inscribed with the names of that ruler's ancestors going back to the reign of Tīmūr (1336–1405). A highly potent symbol of Mughal royal authority, these seals are known from documents – largely firmans – from the Mughal emperors from Bābur (1526–30) down to Bahādur Shāh (1837–57) and the form was imitated by the nineteenth-century sultan Alaaddin Muḥammad of Aceh. Its fame reaching beyond India, it was known and marvelled at by European visitors to the Mughal court.

### Features of Indo-Muslim seals

The British Museum seals catalogued in this section were largely acquired by individuals serving in India such as Alexander Cunningham, William Marsden or William Stanley Talbot. They contain for the most part particular features in terms of inscriptions, dates, and titles of individuals which define them unequivocally as being Indo-Muslim seals. There are others however which are included here on account of their provenance, but which could in other circumstances be from Iran as they are engraved with inscriptions Shī'ī in nature.

### LANGUAGE

Persian was the official language of the court and the seals therefore generally employ Persian script and language and follow the pattern established for seals in other parts of the Islamic world. The persons using them may not necessarily have been Muslims, and the use of Persian was also adopted for the seals of Europeans serving in India.

### TERMS INDICATING STATUS OR POSITION

These include the following: *fidawī* (humble servant), *banda* (servant), *'abd* (slave), *murīd* (disciple). The term *banda* is often followed by *dargāh* (court) and often implies that the individual whose name the seal bears was servant 'at the court of' another individual, who has a higher status than him. This could be as much the emperor as another individual. Sometimes the name of the senior individual is not inscribed, a mere mention of subservience by use of the term *banda-i dargāh* is regarded as sufficient.

### DATES

Where the seals are dated, this is mostly in the Hijra calendar. In addition some may bear the regnal year (RY) of the emperor, some indeed may be dated to the regnal year alone. There are also examples of seals dated using the *Vikram Samvat* calendar (VS). This began in 58 BC and was widely employed amongst the mercantile communities of north India. Individuals serving in India had their seals dated to the Christian era.

### NAMES OF INDIVIDUALS

These follow the pattern of Islamic seals more generally. 'Son of' is denoted in most cases by *ibn* or *walad*, or *bint* for daughter. The exact relationship would normally be determined by the order in which the patronymic separates the names, i.e. X *ibn* Y would mean X is the son of Y. However, while the inscription normally has to be read from the base of the seal up, this is not always the case and in the absence of any corroborative evidence, it can be difficult to be certain which name comes before which.

The individuals whose names appear on the seals include princes, private people and administrators. Most bear Muslim names but there are also a number which have names that are clearly Hindu. These often have a religious connotation. Suffixes like '–Dās' indicate devotion to the divinity whose name precedes the term, e.g. 'Keshav Dās' would mean 'devotee (literally 'slave') to Keshava', or Vishnu. '–Nāth' is a proprietary suffix, standing for support or affinity with. Thus 'Dinānāth' would mean one who supports the helpless. Suffixes like '–Mal', as in 'Kānjī Mal', are specific to individuals belonging to the mercantile castes and communities, thus affording some indication of the social standing of the individual. '–Chand' denotes the moon; therefore 'Nihāl Chand' would mean the 'blemish-free or pure moon' while 'Faṭḥ Chand' would mean the 'victorious moon'. Names ending in '–Dayāl' indicate that the individual so named received compassion from the name of the divinity whose names precedes the suffix '–Gurudayāl' would mean one favoured by the Guru. Names of other Hindu divinities such as 'Harbans' (the 'flute of God', in reference to the god Krishna, who was renowned for his prowess as a flautist) and 'Bālkrishan' (the Child Krishna) are also found.

Muslim names appearing on seals in this group are standard, 'Muḥammad' being the most common. Amongst names with suffixes, '–Bakhsh' (gifted by) and '–Allāh' (of the Almighty) appear frequently.

### TITLES AND HONORIFIC TERMS

The most common Islamic honorific used on the seals is 'Khān' which has Mongol origins and denotes 'exalted' or noble status. 'Sayyid' is used for descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad.



Names of rulers are followed by ‘*Pādshāh Ghāzī*’ – Emperor, Warrior of the Faith – and ‘*Bahādur*’ or ‘brave’. The Emperor Awrangzīb (1658–1707) is referred to as ‘*Amīr al-Mu’minīn*’ (Commander of the Faithful) on one of the seals (Cat. 623). General terms denoting status such as ‘Shaykh’ or ‘Khawājā’ are encountered on some seals. There is one instance of Shāh (Cat. 569) which does not always therefore denote royalty.

European individuals are termed as ‘*Ṣāhib Bahādurs*’ or ‘Brave Lords’. On one seal, ‘Mister’ appears as the honorific for the bearer of the seal who is an Englishman. The seal of Major-General Sir Willoughby Cotton (Cat. 627) gives Persian transliterations of his army rank and knight status.

A seal invoking the mercy of ‘the True Guru’ mentions the owner with the Hindu honorific of ‘*Srī*’ (auspicious) preceding the spiritual term and ‘*Jī*’ (venerable) following it (Cat. 615). But largely, seals mentioning the name of Hindu individuals are without an honorific or title.

#### SCRIPT

The script predominantly used on the seals in this section is the cursive script *nasta’līq*. The principal script of Iran for poetry and non-Qur’ānic texts, its use spread to India along with the Persian language (Blair 2006: 552–6). As a consequence it can sometimes be difficult to distinguish Persian from Indian seals. Often in similar arrangement and style to designs on coins, there are frequent extensions of letters such as the final letter *yā*’ creating different registers (e.g. Cat. 588). Diacriticals are used but haphazardly and, as with Persian seals, they frequently have backgrounds of dots (which can be confused with the diacriticals) or clusters of flowers. East India company officials also used Persian in their seals, set into pyramidal or other shaped mounts, and these were often impressed into red sealing wax and carried in a silk bag along with the document (*kharīṭa*) (Cat. 631).<sup>31</sup> This was also the practice of Indian rulers of the later period.

#### Seal practice under the Ottomans

As in other parts of the post-medieval Islamic world, there were royal, administrative and personal seals in use during the Ottoman period in all parts of the empire. A collection of Ottoman seal stamps in the Bibliothèque Nationale illustrates the variety of types (Richard 2005: 338). However, there are some features of practice and style which distinguish Ottoman seal practice. As far as the royal seals are concerned, for example, the large collection in the Topkapi palace, which also includes the seals of princes, princesses and officials (Uzunçarsili 1959: 12–20), suggests that these were not destroyed on the sultan’s death. Another distinguishing feature is the fact that many of the seals are signed by the seal engraver. This phenomenon is discussed below in the context of seal engravers more generally.

Until the eighteenth century, the imperial seal of the sultan, the *mühr-i humayun*, was in the form of a ring. When not in use it was kept in a silk purse and hung around the neck. The seal was held by the grand vizier as a sign of trust: upon achieving office the grand vizier ‘received the seal’; when dismissed ‘the seal was taken from him’ (Acar 1999: 290). Although seals start to appear on documents from the reign of Mehmed II (1444–81) (Umur 1980: 110), the earliest known surviving royal seal ring is that of Selīm I (1512–20) (Uzunçarsili 1959: 12, no. 1). A

circular seal, its legend is engraved in the form of a square and partly in mirror writing, with the Arabic phrase ‘*tawakkulī ‘alā khāliqī*’, ‘my trust is in my creator’, and with the sultan’s name in the centre. This style of seal starts to appear in Iran from about the fifteenth century and the use of the phrase itself has a long tradition (Cat. 380). As with the Persian seals, Arabic is used for the religious part of the inscription. In the Topkapi palace collection the earliest *tughra* on a royal seal is that of Ahmed III (1707–30) (Uzunçarsili 1959: 13, no. 3); during this period *tughras* also appear regularly on coins as well (Lane Poole 1883, vol. 8: 157ff.). The use of the *tughra* on seals was not just the prerogative of the sultans as the device appears on later personal seals such as the example in the British Museum collection (Cat. 447) and elsewhere. The other royal seals in Topkapi palace – the latest belonging to Mehmed V (1909–18) are in a variety of styles and scripts: a seal of ‘Abd al-Hamid II (1876–1909) includes the magical protective word *budūh* (Uzunçarsili 1959: 32ff.; see Chapter 9: Amulets).

The most succinct account of Ottoman seal practice both for personal and official use is given by Acar in the appendix to his *Turkish Calligraphy* (Acar 1999). Personal seals are inscribed with a person’s name in addition to a verse from the Qur’ān or the *Ḥadīth* or an invocation. Sometimes a symbol of the personality of the owner of the seal is engraved, in addition to his profession or sect: for example, ‘Let my work be good and benevolent like my name’ (*khalīl* means good and righteous) on the seal of the person called Khalīl Ṣāliḥ’ (Acar 1999: 291, fn. 14), or ‘O Muḥammad, protect Muṣṭafā who is one of your followers’ on the seal of the person named Muṣṭafā (Acar 1999: 291, fn. 14). This seal offers an interesting parallel to Persian seals, where there is frequently an invocation to one of the Holy figures of Islam which is also the name of the owner of the seal: for this case, the Prophet Muḥammad is also known by the epithet ‘al-Muṣṭafā’, ‘the chosen’.

#### Forgery

The problem of forged seals was certainly recognised early on in the Islamic period. The Prophet himself is believed to have said, ‘I have had a seal made, so let no-one engrave anything on top of the inscription’ (Balādhurī 1978: 448, and see above ‘The *dīwān al-khātim*’). Another story told by Balādhurī from the period of the reign of ‘Umar I (634–44) highlights both how integral the seal had now become for the administration of the state and the sort of abuse which its false use could lead to. It concerns a man named Ma’n b. Zā’ida who, it is said, engraved on the caliphal seal (*khātim al-khilāfah*) and thus obtained money from the land tax (*kharāj*) of Kūfa (Balādhurī 1956: 567). Although the reference does not tell us much more except how he was punished, this suggests that Ma’n might have substituted his own name in place of that of the official collector. We know from both extant seals and literary references that seals were frequently re-cut or re-engraved for different purposes.

The problem of forged seals continued as long as seals were used. In Safavid Iran seals were mostly kept around the neck, only removed in the bath, and, when forgery did occur, the culprits were severely punished. The artist ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, a favourite of Shāh Tahmasp I (1524–76), was said to have forged the Shāh’s seal and had both his ears and nose cut off (Floor 2001: 73). In Turkey, Charles White, writing in the mid-

nineteenth century, describes how such great care is taken to ensure the genuineness of a seal that

the trade are forbidden to engrave two seals exactly the same for the same person ... when a seal is lost, the owner by altering the inscription is enabled to detect forgeries... The alteration consists in the addition of a flower made in the new one; in the change of the ornament encircling the inscription; or in the date. (White 1845, vol. 3: 149)

Some 30 years earlier, in his *Journey through Persia*, James Morier describes an incident in which his host 'was thrown into great agitation from having missed his seals from his bosom where they are always carried'. He explains:

Amongst an intriguing and malicious people it is easy to turn the possession of a man's seal to his disgrace by making out false documents ... letters or papers generally written by *mirzas* or hired scribes. It is seldom that any clue can be obtained from the handwriting, for it is the seal that makes the document valid or not. One of the king's ministers once very coolly wiped the seal from off a paper he did not wish to acknowledge and he then looked upon himself as secure. (Morier 1812: 48)

### Seal engravers

While the dies of coins and glass stamps were occasionally signed,<sup>32</sup> there are no early Islamic seals to my knowledge signed by their maker. As far as textual references are concerned, for the early period, names of engravers are very occasionally mentioned, such as the caliph 'Alī's muezzin 'Abdallāh b. Abī Rifā'ī, who was also his scribe and engraved his seal (Mas'ūdī 1893: 297). Charles White, in his description of the seal engravers of Istanbul in 1848, says,

the engravers of signet rings on stone attribute the first invention to the Kaliph Osman, and venerate Mohammed ul Hijazy, an Arab of Yemen, as their first master. He it was they affirm who engraved signets for Osman and Ali, which bore their names. (White 1846, vol. 3: 150)

For Mughal India, as discussed above, Abū'l Faḥl gives the names of the prominent seal engravers of his day. They were not only skilled in the art of writing particular scripts, but some had other skills as well. Mawlānā Maqṣūd of Herāt, for example, also engraved scientific instruments, and Mīr Dost of Kābul understood assaying (Abū'l Faḥl 1869, vol. 1: 54–5).

Some of the fullest information regarding seal engravers in terms of both textual information and evidence from seals and seal impressions comes from Turkey. The main documentary accounts are those of the seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller Evliya Çelebi and of Charles White, who as aforementioned was in Constantinople in the mid-nineteenth century. Evliya Çelebi distinguishes three groups of craftsmen each of whom had their own patron saint, and it is interesting to see how firmly demarcated the different tasks were (Çelebi 1834: 190–2; Denny and Nizami 1993):

1. Engravers on stone, *ḥakkakān*, 105 workmen in 30 shops. They engraved on stones such as agate, garnet, turquoise and jasper. Their patron saint or *pīr* was 'Abdallāh Yamānī...<sup>33</sup>
2. The engravers of *mühür*, *mühürkenān*, who worked especially for the viziers, 80 workmen in 50 shops. Their *pīr* was the caliph 'Uthmān. In the reign of Murād IV, the most noted were Maḥmūd Çelebi, Riḍā Çelebi and Ferīd Çelebi, who charged from 100 to 500 piastres for their work.
3. The engravers of silver seals and talismans, *mühürkenān-i sīm ü heyākil*, 40 workmen in 15 shops... These workmen 'cannot engrave Yemeni agate'.

Charles White, writing some two centuries later, is interested in the guild of seal engravers. He mentions the quarter in which they work, the fact that they are Muslims as opposed to the stone dealers who are Jews, and their training.

[Apprentices] take lessons from the best calligraphers of the day, and are apprenticed for seven years to master-engravers. At the expiration of their apprenticeship they work at fixed wages, until they are able to purchase the good-will of a shop and are admitted master members of the corporation, which is limited to fifty. (White 1845, vol. 1: 148)

In the eighteenth century it became commonplace for seal engravers to engrave their names on the seals in tiny script. Uzunçarsili and Acar give long lists of names starting with Avni in 1114/1702–3, 'Alī in 1133/1720–1, and ending with Ziya in 1313–15/1895–6. While they were training they might be given a pseudonym by their master based upon their skill and personality; sometimes a master might give his own name, or the name of a well-known engraver might be taken. Acar illustrates a page from Mecdi Effendi's book of seal stamps. 'All the seal engravers had a book covering the stamps of the seals they had made. Customers chose an example and gave the passage to be engraved' (Acar 1999: 292). He cites a poem by Enderunlu Fazil where the wounds endured by the lover are compared to a seal engraver's manual.<sup>34</sup>

There is an intriguing and, as far as I know, unique signature of a seal engraver on a large volcanic stone (Fig. 1) in the name of the Khwarazm Shāh Jalāl al-Dīn Mengubirti (1220–31), acquired by the British Museum (Ghouchani 1990: 46–8; Porter 1997: 180–1), the purpose of which is at present unclear. At its base is an inscription signed by the engraver of the stone Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Jawharī, known as Rashīd *al-ḥakkāk al-Nīshāpūrī*, and dated 628/1230–1. The design is a curious mixture of elements. It shows a foliate arch in the centre with columns on either side bearing a close resemblance to a mid-thirteenth-century lustre tile *mihrab* in the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin (Pope and Ackermann 1939, vol. 5: 704). However,



**Figure 1** Volcanic stone dated 628/1230–1, signed Maḥmūd bin Muḥammad al-Jawharī al-Rashīd al-Ḥakkāk al-Nīshāpūrī (BM 1990 6–12 1); 47 × 29 cm

what is of interest in the present context is that in the lower half is a smaller arch made from extending letter forms and a knot motif above the word ‘Allāh’. This design in various forms can be seen on seals, e.g. **Cat. 220** and **226**. From the inscription we learn that Maḥmūd was both a jeweller (*jawharī*) and a seal engraver (*ḥakkāk*); the latter term was encountered above in the Turkish form for seal engravers (plural *ḥakkākān*). We saw earlier how seal engravers often used their skills in other ways. A further connection with the Nishapur region is that it was known in medieval times as a good source for semi-precious stones, and seals have been recovered during the Nishapur excavations (see below: ‘Seals and amulets from archaeological sites’). In terms of identifying this Muḥammad al-Jawharī, a certain Muḥammad al-Jawharī al-Nīshāpūrī is the author of a treatise on precious stones and minerals, the *Jowhar-name-ye Nezāmī*, written in 1196 and dedicated to Nizām al-Mulk, vizier of the Khwarazm Shah ruler Tekesh (1172–1200) (Porter 2003). One could speculate that either this same Muḥammad or a member of his family also called Muḥammad was also responsible for engraving the stone and seal stones which remain anonymous to us today.

### Parallels between coins and seals

There are close parallels to be drawn between seals and coins in terms of the style and content of the inscriptions and techniques of engraving, both types of objects being of such similar scale. Indeed it is clear that at certain periods the same people engraved both coin dies and seals. This relationship has been examined in the context of Byzantine seals and coins by Cécile Morrisson, who discusses parallels in methods of manufacture, iconography and epigraphy (Morrisson 1987). Maqrīzī describes how, when the Abbasid caliph al-Ma’mūn came to power, he could not find a single artist who could engrave dies for dirhams. Consequently the dirhams were engraved with a bow drill ‘as seals are engraved’ (Sauvaire 1882: 325; see also **Sax and Meeks: Methods of Engraving**). This passage raises, however, more questions than it answers about both die and seal engravers and their relative status, and does not explain why there was such a shortage of die engravers at this time.

In addition to the obvious similarities in scale between coins and seals, there are particular parallels in style and content of inscriptions. For the early Islamic seals, there are clear comparisons with Umayyad dirhams and copper coins, to which attention has been drawn by Ralph Pinder-Wilson, focusing on elements of design such as the star and crescent, and the six-pointed star (Pinder-Wilson 1987: 378–9). From about the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries there are parallels in the appearance of the names of the twelve Shī‘ī imams, which in both coins and seals are arranged around a square and again in particular ornaments, especially a complicated knot motif (**Table 3**).<sup>35</sup> Coin and seal engravers are linked much later in the Ottoman Empire by Charles White, who writes that the seal engravers shops are regularly searched by the police ‘who see that proprietors do not engrave... moulds for false coin, or other forbidden articles’ (White 1845, vol. 3: 149).

### Seals and amulets from archaeological sites

Excavated seals are uncommon; references that have been gleaned to finds reports are cited here. It is hoped that more can be collected in the future, as they have the potential to provide

useful data as to provenance, and the spread and dating of seal types.

The largest group is associated with the excavations of Nishapur in eastern Iran (Jenkins and Keene 1983: 19–27). The word ‘associated’ is used here advisedly for, as far as it is possible to discover, the seals are believed to come from Nishapur, but were not unearthed during the course of the excavations. The group consists of seven seal stones made from jet, carnelian, turquoise, lapis, haematite and rock crystal and have been dated by Jenkins and Keene to around the tenth to the eleventh century. With the exception of jet, all these materials are represented in the British Museum’s collection, and the variety in script styles also echoes those represented in this catalogue. The jet seal is in the form of a block with a hole for suspension which is comparable in shape to a tenth- to eleventh-century rock crystal seal in the Museum for Islamic Art in Cairo (*Trésors Fatimides* 1998: no. 84). This shape may derive from a Sasanian seal shape (Gyselen 1993: 114, 311–12; Soucek 2002: 244). The haematite example has a gold wire fitting and is engraved on the four faces of the stone with a variety of inscriptions which include the phrase ‘*amana man āmana billāh*’ (‘safe is he who believes in God’), which features on **Cat. 220–222**. An amulet from the same source has a series of names which are those of ‘Alī, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and, on one side, a lion with a scorpion (Jenkins and Keene 1983: 19–21, fig. 1); see also **Cat. A168ff.**). Also included among the Nishapur group is an amulet inscribed in ‘linear Kufic’, a style frequently found on amulets (**Cat. A152ff.**).

From the excavation of Qaṣr ‘Ayn al-Sīl in Jordan, in an Umayyad context was found a silver seal ring engraved in angular script (Bisheh 1989: 103). From the excavations at Fustāt, Alī Bahgat Bey recovered two Fatimid period amulets with inscriptions, one of which is enamelled and in the form of a brooch inscribed ‘God is generous and a protector’ (*Allāh khayr ḥāfīz*), the other has a six-pointed star below the inscription (Bahgat Bey 1923: 61; *Islamic art in Egypt* 1969: 28, no. 7). Also from the Fatimid period are finds at Caesarea which include an amulet and amulet cases (*Trésors Fatimides* 1998: 133, no. 72). A number of seals, including a magical one, were also found during excavations at Hama in Syria, largely from fourteenth-century levels;<sup>36</sup> and a bronze amulet inscribed with lines of numerals and letters was found at Ephesus in Turkey (**Cat. A150**).

From the Gulf, a single carnelian seal was found during excavations at Ras al-Ḥadd in Oman, the pottery associated with the layer from which it came, dated to about eleventh–twelfth century (**Fig. 2**) (Andrew Petersen pers. comm.; Whitcomb 1975; Insoll 1999: 117). A number of seals and amulets dateable between the ninth and fourteenth centuries were found at the



**Figure 2** Carnelian seal (image reversed) from Ras al-Ḥadd (Oman). Photo: Andrew Petersen



excavations of Qal'at al-Bahrain (Porter 2001: 201–3). The most significant group have come from the excavations of the medieval port city of Siraf. It flourished from the mid-eighth to the early eleventh century and the site was excavated by David Whitehouse over six seasons between 1966 and 1973. The finds from the excavations are in a number of museums including the British Museum and this material is currently under study by Seth Priestman. The finds relevant to this catalogue are two seal rings and a clay bulla stamped with several different names (**Cat. 8**). From Saudi Arabia, a number of Abbasid period metal seals with angular inscriptions were found at al-Rabadha on the Darb Zubayda.<sup>37</sup>

From Gao in West Africa we have evidence of a seal cutter's agate (Insoll 2000: 131–2). From Shanga on the East African coast comes the significant find of a seal ring in a context of c. 800. This is a silver ring set with a black jasper stone inscribed in an angular script of simple style (Horton 1996: 357, pl. 130). Presumed to have been imported to East Africa from the central Islamic lands, its presence among the excavation finds of Shanga is important, 'pointing to the domestic use of objects within an Arab milieu' (Horton 1996: 357). The date also ties in with the finds of the coins from the site, the earliest of which are c. 800–900 (Brown 1996: 369). From the site of Tegdaoust in the Sahel area of Morocco was discovered a fragment of a seal found in a metal box with six Almoravid dinars struck between 1110 and 1116.<sup>38</sup>

The find from the furthest afield is an oval glass seal found in the Malay archipelago at the site of Lobu Tua, Barus. Inscribed in simple angular script '*lillāh* or *billāh*' (for or by God) 'Muhammad', it shares with **Cat. 226** the feature that the *hā'* of Allāh is in the centre of the word. Kalus has tentatively dated it to the tenth or the eleventh century (Kalus 2000: 23–4).

Outside the Islamic world, in a Viking context, an inscribed amethyst set into a silver ring was found at the excavations at Birka in Sweden, together with other pieces of jewellery which are believed to be c. ninth century in date (Arbman 1943: 155). Viking sites in Scandinavia and Britain have yielded thousands of Islamic coins that travelled from the Islamic lands as a result of trade with the 'Rus', as the Vikings were known in the Islamic world. Although silver was the main interest of the Vikings, they also picked up curios along the way such as beads, Islamic metalwork and glass. Associated with the Birka find is the Ballycotton cross brooch (**Cat. 232**) found in a bog in Ireland in 1875 and set with an Islamic glass seal which has the same inscription as the Birka ring (Porter and Ager 1999). Again, it was probably Vikings who brought the seal to Europe, where it was set in the Carolingian cross brooch, the collet of which seems almost certainly to have been made to measure, such is the exactness of the fit. The significance of both the Birka ring and the cross brooch is that they provide us with a late eighth- to early ninth-century date for the group of seals of this type (**Cat. 233ff**).

Like finds of jewellery from archaeological contexts (Allan 1986: 5–17), finds of seals and amulets in archaeological contexts, although rare, can be of inestimable value in terms of trying to establish dates and provenance for the many seals which are otherwise of undetermined location and date.

## Style and content of the early seals

This section of the Introduction looks at some specific features of the style and content of the early Islamic seals in the British Museum collection: the styles of scripts and the dating of early Islamic seals, grammatical and other linguistic features, and the use of ornaments. The content of the seals is then discussed, the type and structure of Muslim names, and, finally, the range of phrases that occur.

### Definition of scripts

#### THE ANGULAR SCRIPT

It has been increasingly recognised by those working on early inscriptions that the word 'Kufic' is no longer appropriate as a term for the early angular script. Sharon for example has argued that 'there is no justification for calling the old Arabic script, which was used until the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, by the name Kūfī. The Arabs wrote in this script long before Kūfah was established. The term 'angular' exactly describes the shape of this script' (Sharon 1997: xv). The wide variety of styles previously collected under the umbrella term 'Kufic' is also rejected by Déroche, who in his analysis of early Qur'āns has established his own typology (Déroche 1992: 11–16).

The term 'angular', which Sharon has adopted, is also used in this catalogue. In the context of the early seals this makes good sense, particularly because of the wide variety of letter forms that are encountered, some corresponding to Umayyad monumental script, others having rounded, cursive elements which are combined with angular features.

#### CURSIVE SCRIPTS

Geoffrey Khan has clearly demonstrated the gradual increase in cursive elements in Arabic papyri, particularly evident from the ninth century (Khan 1992: 39–44). The large variety of cursive scripts in use by the ninth century led eventually to the establishment of a system of proportion and the development of a single cursive script, *naskh*. Along the way, a style which has been described as 'broken cursive' has been identified in a series of manuscripts from the tenth century which combines the angular style with more rounded elements (Blair 2006: 151–7). This style is associated with the calligrapher and vizier Ibn Muqla (d.940); however, it was Ibn al-Bawwāb (d.1022) who was credited with turning the 'broken cursive' script in to a more rounded, free-flowing script with strict rules of proportion. This led directly to *naskh*, 'the copyist's hand', which began to predominate at different times and in varying parts of the Islamic lands from about the eleventh century (Blair 2006: 160–78). Other scripts belonging to the 'six styles' proliferated after that, followed in Iran from about the fifteenth century by the development of the script *nasta'liq* (Blair 2006: 428–48).

### Epigraphy and dating

It follows from the above that the seal matrices attributable to the early period are inscribed in a variety of angular and cursive scripts. However, while some of the seals in this section are inscribed in a style that can with reasonable certainty be ascribed to a particular period, other seals are not so straightforward, either because they are so carelessly written that they defy classification altogether, or because they include early angular letter forms combined with later cursive forms.

The useful charts and alphabets produced by Grohmann and others for the early script provide clear indications about when particular letter forms start to appear (Grohmann 1971; Gruendler 1993; Arif 1967), but it is often difficult to establish how long particular forms may have continued in use. There are times, as for example under the Ilkhanids (Blair 1983), when the angular script was used on coins for ornamental purposes only, while in magic – even to this day – letter forms written in a recognisably early angular style are used because they are regarded as particularly efficacious (see **Chapter 9 Amulets**).

For the seals with cursive-style inscriptions, while some of the scripts mentioned above such as *naskh* or *nasta'liq*, can sometimes be distinguished, for the most part it is impossible and these have simply been described as 'cursive'.

The early seals are undated: dates do not begin to appear with any frequency on seals until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (see **Chapter 7 Dated Seals**). Dating the seals, with all their variety of script styles, is therefore difficult. Although they are few, the extant clay sealings on Arabic papyri provide a useful basis for comparison in terms of style and content of the inscription. For it is matrices such as some of the examples in the first part of the catalogue that would have been used to make the impressions. The administrative lead seals are another invaluable source of comparison, as are the rare seals from secure archaeological contexts. The closest related material is coins and glass stamps, and then Arabic epigraphic material more widely – in particular, dated rock graffiti and epitaphs can be used.<sup>39</sup>

In the following section, a number of epigraphic styles are highlighted which feature on the early seals (see **Table 1**). These have been divided into four different groups.

#### **A: SIMPLE ANGULAR STYLE WITH WIDE SPACING (TABLE 1A)**

This style can be broadly defined as having simple angular letter forms without ornament, with letters that are widely spaced and often quite large. It can be broadly placed within about the first two centuries of the Islamic era and parallels the letter shapes found on early Islamic copper coins, particularly Umayyad and early Abbasid examples, and glass stamps.<sup>40</sup> The same features (with variations in the size of the letters, the thickness and the spacing) appear more widely in monumental stone inscriptions from the seventh to eighth centuries, such as the inscriptions on the dam at Tā'if dated 58/677–8 (Miles 1948), the Dome of the Rock mosaic inscription dated 72/691–2 (Blair 1992: fig. 9), and milestones of the Umayyad period (L'Islam 1977: 72 fig. 71; Elad 1999). The letter shapes on seals in this group are also attested on many of the graffiti dating to the seventh to eighth centuries recorded in Saudi Arabia (al-Muaikeil 1994; al-Rāshid 1995), and they sometimes occur in Arabic papyri (Khan 1992: 27–38).

#### **B: SIMPLE ANGULAR STYLE WITH NARROWER SPACING (TABLE 1B)**

In this category, many of the same letter forms are in evidence as in A, but there is a tendency to narrower spacing between the letters. In some cases the words form continuous lines. This feature seems to appear on glass stamps from the mid-ninth century (Morton 1985: 128, no. 364). From a rare dateable context, the seal from Shanga, which can be dated to c. 800–900 (Horton 1996: 357), is comparable in its elongated *kāfs* and *dāls* to seals in this group (see, for example, **Cat. 74**).<sup>41</sup> Another

feature noted here is the underlining of an inscription. This comes in two forms: firstly an underline is created by extending the end of the letter *yā'* to double back upon itself – a feature found in early inscriptions, both monumental and on the less formal graffiti, and in papyrus documents (Grohmann 1971, vol. 2: chart II; Khan 1992: 37; Gruendler 1993: 23; Rāshid 1995: 68, 191) although in papyri the return of the *yā'* generally underlines a word rather than a whole line. A second form is where the words all join together (**Cat. 58**). This is a feature of magical inscriptions discussed below. Also included here among the simple angular scripts are inscriptions, where the letters consist of thinly engraved short or long strokes. A suggested eighth- to ninth-century date for this group is provided by a glass seal of this type set into a Carolingian cross-brooch in the British Museum (**Cat. 232**), as well as the find of an amethyst and silver seal ring from the Viking age grave at Birka with a very similar style of inscription. They also resemble the inscriptions on Umayyad coins.

#### **C: ANGULAR SCRIPT, EMBELLISHED WITH WEDGE-SHAPED OR FOLIATE TERMINALS (TABLE 1C)**

Although it is difficult to be precise, script ornamentation starts to appear in the angular script during the ninth century (Sourdell-Thomine *et al.*, 'Khatt', EI<sup>2</sup>) and occurs more regularly during the following century. However, early beginnings of ornamentation can already be seen in the *alifs* and *lāms* of late seventh- to eighth-century inscriptions (Gruendler 1993, e.g. EI6). It is particularly the terminals of the letters that first begin to show the signs of decoration. Thus we find what have been described by Grohmann as 'wedge-shaped terminals' (Grohmann 1957: 183f.), that is, triangular projections jutting out to the left or right, for instance at the tops of the *alifs*. In some cases – in the word Allāh, for example – these projections are linked together to form horizontal lines (**Cat. 277**). Forked terminals, where the top of the letters bifurcate, are another feature. These occur at the tops of *lāms* and *alifs* or the tops of other letters such as *dāls* or *kāfs*. *Mīms* and *rās*, which often loop upwards, also frequently end in forked terminals (**Cat. 112**). The appearance of these features is paralleled on coins from the tenth century, as in the example struck at Wāsiṭ in AH 321 (see **Table 1C**). Foliate features in the script, where the letters extend into an arabesque, also appear. A common feature is the extension of the *nūn* of *bin* (**Cat. 159**). Abbasid coins of the late twelfth and early thirteenth century have similar foliate features. One of the most elaborate of the early seals has terminals which are topped by teardrop shapes. Reinaud believed this design to represent the six minarets of the Ka'ba at Mecca; Grohmann described the style as belonging to the Saljuq period (**Cat. 341**).

#### **D: ANGULAR-CURSIVE AND INTO NASKH (TABLE 1D)**

As mentioned above, a form of cursive script existed from the early Islamic period which co-existed with the more formal angular script of the monumental inscriptions and Qur'āns. The type of cursive seen on papyrus documents from about the eighth century is distinguished from the cursive *naskh* script, which does not come into full use until about the twelfth century. The cursive elements on the seals vary greatly; some just soften the angular features of the angular style or include cursive letter forms with angular ones (**Cat. 45**); others are more

cursive than angular (**Cat. 336**), or, in the case of **Cat. 313**, which also has a rare example of diacritical marks, can be described as entirely cursive. A group which seems mid-way between angular and cursive, includes the seals inscribed with the names of the Twelve Imams or Fourteen Immaculates (e.g. **Cat. 353**), which are engraved in a scratchy style.

The transition from angular to fully cursive scripts seems to appear in monumental epigraphy of the eastern Islamic lands from the eleventh century, the need for inscriptions to be legible leading to the abandonment of floriated and interlaced Kufic scripts for all but decorative purposes. On coins, the earliest to have *naskh* inscriptions are those of the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil (1218–36) (Balog 1980: 49; Blair 1998: 88ff.).

### Grammatical and orthographic features

One of the most common grammatical features on the early seals (also in a variety of inscriptions in other materials) is the omission of the medial *alif* (Hopkins 1984: 11; Morton 1985: 42). Thus the name Hārūn is written as Harūn (**Cat. 143**), Ibrāhīm as Ibrahīm (**Cat. 32**), ‘Uthmān as ‘Uthman (**Cat. 102**). Other features sometimes found on the early seals are the spelling of the *alif maqṣūra* as an *alif* as in *ta’ālā*; (**Cat. 245**) or *wafā bihi* (**Cat. 313**) (Hopkins 1984: 14), and the omission of the *hamza* (in the *mā shā’a Allāh* group and elsewhere, e.g. **Cat. 276**) (Hopkins 1984: 19). The use of diacriticals is haphazard and they only appear very occasionally (**Cat. 313**).<sup>42</sup>

### Rhyming assonantal inscriptions and parallels with coins

*Muḥammad b. Dā’ūd yathiq billāh al-ma’būd* (**Cat. 186**) is an example of a number of inscriptions using assonance that appear on the seals. This is generally created by the use of similar sounds (*Dā’ūd/ma’būd*) rather than the pure rhyme which is based on the use of the root consonants. An interesting parallel between coins and seals in this context is provided by early coins of East Africa which are structured in a similar way and use the same terminology as the seals, in particular the word *yathiq* ‘trust’. From Shanga are mid-ninth- to tenth-century coins inscribed, for example, *al-mulk lillāh, wa bihi yathiq ‘Abdallāh* (Brown 1996: 369–72), and a group of c. eleventh-century East African coins are inscribed *‘Abd al-Raḥmān yathiq bi’l-Raḥmān*.<sup>43</sup>

### Ornamentation (Table 2A and B)

Ornamentation on the early seals appears in a variety of forms and consists of either marginal designs, such as chevron patterns creating a frame for the inscription, or particular motifs within the inscriptional field. The most frequent of these motifs is a star, often combined with a crescent, which also appears on Islamic coins and is clearly derived from Sasanian coins and seals (see above pp. 2–3). There are also knot patterns, V-shaped ornaments and others, the full range including designs on later seals is shown in **Table 2**.

### Shapes and mounts (Table 3)

A range of the shapes used for the early seals are shown in **Table 3A**. There are seals in the form of a dome, associated with Sasanian seals (see above), seals cut *en cabochon* with flat bases, which are generally associated with early forms of Arabic script, and a variety of seals, rectangular, square or round, where the seal is cut on the flat surface. These have bevelled

sides, shallow or steep. In many cases it is clear that an inscribed seal has been cut down in order to be re-cut. The seals were mostly set into rings (e.g. **Cat. 43**) but these rarely survive. Seals with mounts (see **Table 3C**) were used in the early Islamic period, in the two metal seals **Cat. 86** and **205**, the inscription is engraved on the face of the mount, a tradition that was continued (**Cat. 55**). Mounts set with carnelian or other seals had open finials that would have enabled them to be carried on a string. The mounts of the seals of officials serving in India were often silver and conical in shape (**Cat. 626**).

### Names

In an Islamic context, names and their meanings play an important role. The Prophet Muḥammad is believed to have said ‘on the day of Resurrection, you will be called by your names and the names of your fathers, so keep beautiful names’ (Kister 1980: 3). Kister’s detailed examination of the types of names used in the early Islamic era demonstrates how the Prophet actively guided his community in their choice of names, often changing names that had been current before Islam. If names were associated with devils or *jinn* they were altered – Banū Shayṭān to Banū ‘Abdallāh, for example – as were names regarded as disagreeable. There were names that he disliked, such as Ḥarb or Murra, and he believed in the close relationship between the name of a child and his fate.

Names in Arabic consist of a number of different component parts, as set out below.

#### (a) The *ism*

The *ism* is the given name. Some names occur with the definite article, such as al-Qāsim, al-Ḥusayn, al-Walīd; in direct speech and sometimes in the written form the article is dropped. Other names, such as Muḥammad or Ibrāhīm, never have the definite article. The names inscribed on the British Museum seals reflect the range and types of names favoured in Islamic societies. By far the most common Arabic names are Muḥammad and Aḥmad, two of the Prophet’s names. Other popular names include those of ‘the Rightly-Guided caliphs’: Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī; the twelve Shī‘ī imams, particularly Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, or names of patriarchs or prophets mentioned in the Qur’ān, such as Moses (Mūsā), Abraham (Ibrāhīm), Zachariyah (Zakariyā), Ishmael (Ismā‘īl) and Joseph (Yūsuf). Also popular from the early Islamic era are compound names such as ‘Abdallāh, the ‘servant of God’, or the addition of ‘servant’ to one of God’s beautiful names, such as al-Raḥmān, which becomes ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, ‘the servant of the merciful one’ or ‘Abd al-Salām, the servant of peace. These names, Kister suggested, ‘were a clear indication of the new spirit of obedience and submission to Allah’ (Kister 1980: 8).

In addition to their association with particular religious figures, many Arabic names, based as they are on trilateral or quadrilateral roots, all have immediately comprehensible meanings. The popular name Qāsim (**Cat. 111**), from the root *qsm*, to divide, for example, means ‘distributor’ or ‘divider’; Salmān (**Cat. 71**) means ‘safe’; Sa‘īd (**Cat. 69**) fortunate; and al-Muṭaḥhar (**Cat. 140**) purified. Haytham (**Cat. 132**) is one of a number of popular animal or bird *isms* meaning the chick of an eagle, regarded as a good omen for bravery (Schimmel 1989: 2). The play on words on the name Khalīl in the *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* was noted above (see ‘Personal seals: literary references’ above). The Prophet is said to have drawn omens



from particular names: Ḥasan, for example, meaning good. ‘When he heard a man addressing someone “Ḥasan”, he said “Yā Ḥasan, from your mouth we have taken the good omen”’ (Kister 1980: 13).

Despite the lack of diacriticals on the early seal inscriptions, many of the names which are no longer in use today can be identified because of their occurrence in early historical texts, such as Ṭabarī’s history, or through their appearance in medieval dictionaries of names such as Ṣafādī’s multi-volume *al-Wāfī bi al-Wafāyāt*, or al-Dhahabī’s shorter *Mushtabah*. To cite but a few examples: Ḥafṣ (**Cat. 41** and Kalus 1981: 27) was a name given by the Prophet to Caliph ‘Umar (Ahmed 1999: 64). A Ḥafṣ ibn al-Walīd was governor of Egypt in 726–7 and there are glass stamps in his name (Morton 1985: 75–6). Ḥarb (**Cat. 182**) is a well-attested early Arabic name; Ḥarb b. Umayya, for example, was a leading figure in Meccan society and apparently the first to use Arabic writing (von Donzel *et al.* ‘Ḥarb ibn Umayya’, EI<sup>2</sup>). ‘Alqama (**Cat. 183**) was another popular early name; an ‘Alqama b. Qais, for example, is found in Tha’ālibī’s *Book of Curiosities* (Bosworth 1968: 94); Ḥamza (**Cat. 187**) was popular as it was the name of the Prophet’s uncle Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. The name Sahl (**Cat. 73**) appears on a glass stamp and on graffiti in the Ḥijāz of the first century of the Hijra (Miles 1948: 242; Morton 1985: 134). Shādhī (**Cat. 74**) was the name of the father of the eponymous founder of the Ayyubid dynasty, Ayyūb b. Shādhī b. Marwān (Cahen, ‘Ayyūbids’, EI<sup>2</sup>). Khidr (**Cat. 42**), mentioned in the Qur’ān, was a prophet-saint and guide to wayfarers (Schimmel 1989: 29; Ahmed 1999: 100).

As regards names with Christian associations, Jibrīl (**Cat. 55, 176**) the archangel Gabriel, is most commonly found as a name in a Christian context, and seals bearing it may have had Christian owners. However, the name is found in Islam, although there is a difference of opinion as to whether or not it is permissible (Schimmel 1989: 29). A seal with an unequivocally Christian owner is **Cat. 114**: Matay b. Ḥātim b. Basīl. Matay is the Arabic form of Matthew and Basīl is Basil from the Greek Basileus (meaning ‘king’). However, the Arabic name which has the same sound comes from the Arabic root *basala* and means ‘brave’ or ‘valiant’. The Christian association of this particular seal is, however, reinforced by the crosses.

#### (b) The *kunya*

The *kunya* designates a person as Abū or Umm (father or mother [of] a son or daughter). The reason for the use of the *kunya* even today is principally that it is considered more respectful to refer to someone in this way rather than using their given name. Although in many cases the *kunya* refers to an actual child, people without children could acquire *kunyas*, sometimes fictitious or metaphorical ones. For example, the Zand ruler of Iran in 1779 was known as Abū’l Fath (‘father of victory’); the deceased president of the Palestine National Authority, Yasser ‘Arafāt, was known as Abū ‘Ammār (literally, ‘the father of reconstruction’). These *kunyas* became the way people were most often addressed. *Kunyas* or double *kunyas* are represented on the seals. An interesting example is Abū Naṣr b. Abū’l-‘Alā (**Cat. 37**), ‘the father of Naṣr’ (victory), ‘son of the father of nobility’, which can be described as a metaphorical *kunya*.

#### (c) The *nasab*

The *nasab* represents the pedigree. In a region where genealogy is all-important the father’s name, the grandfather’s, sometimes going back several generations, is almost always found in

epitaphs. On the seals in general only two generations are often represented, Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad for example (**Cat. 32**). The *nisba* could designate the geographical origin of someone, al-Dimashqī, for example, from Damascus. On the seals, however, with one possible exception (**Cat. 144**), there are no geographical *nisbas*.<sup>44</sup> A *nisba* could also designate someone’s religious affiliation: a Shāfi‘ī, for example (after one of the four schools of Islamic law), or as in **Cat. 112**, where the owner is referred to as al-Ḥasanī, after al-Ḥasan, one of the twelve Shī‘ī imams.<sup>45</sup>

#### (d) The *laqab*

The *laqab* can be defined as an ‘honorific title’. Schimmel has described it as ‘serving principally to distinguish people of the same name from each other’ (Schimmel 1989: 50). ‘It could refer to physical characteristics and at times could be extremely fanciful’ (Bosworth 1968: chaps 2 and 3). It could refer to someone’s craft, for example ‘*al-ḥakkāk*’, the seal engraver, as on the basalt stone inscription in the British Museum (**Fig. 1**). From the tenth century, beginning with the Abbasid caliphs, some rulers adopted grandiose and multiple *laqabs*; the Buyids were famed for them and frequently had several which are included both in stone inscriptions and on their coins (Codrington 1904: 58–76). Another type of *laqab* was one associated with religious activities, such as Ḥajjī (in fact a *nisba* in form), to designate the person who has been on the pilgrimage, or *Hajj* (Schimmel 1989: 57).

#### Phrases

The phrases inscribed on the seals include complete verses of the Qur’ān, such as all of *sūra* 112 (**Cat. 215**), a few words from chosen verses, single words or phrases of a generally pious nature, and invocations to God, the Prophet Muḥammad or the Twelve Imams. Sometimes the same inscriptions are inscribed in positive on amulets to bring good luck or protect from the evil eye. The use of these phrases on seals gives an amuletic aspect to the seals and they act as a protection to the wearer (Porter and Ager 1999: 211). In essence, the range and tone of these inscriptions draw on different aspects of Islamic belief, and in many cases these same phrases are found inscribed on different types of objects: epitaphs, ceramic bowls and so on. Particularly close connections are found on the Syrian Ḥajj route (al-Kilābī 2009).

#### Later seals

While the early seals were all in Arabic, the later seals (**Cat. 376** onward, *c.* fifteenth century and later), which correspond to the Kalus ‘post-classical’ grouping, are in either Arabic or Persian, or sometimes a combination of the two. They divide into two groups.

#### Group 1

The first group are round, flat seals, often made from stones in the jade family (see **Humphrey: Identification of the Materials of the Seals; Table 3B and Cat. 382**).<sup>46</sup> An important dated seal in this category is that of Pīr Budāq (d.1466) (Soudavar 1992: 129). Impressions of round, flat Timurid seals are on manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Richard 2005: 340). In many of the round seals, the inscriptions, in *naskh* or similar, are written around a central square which may contain the name of the owner of the seal (**Cat. 377**). An example of this

type in the Hermitage is dated 926/1519–20 (Ivanov 1996: no. 190). A range of benedictory inscriptions are also found, in particular the names of the Shīʿī imams and other phrases of a Shīʿī nature. The round seals include knot motifs – either in the centre, often made up of letters (**Cat. 389**), or as part of the decoration (**Cat. 386**). This feature appears on Ilkhanid coins (Blair 1983). The inscription is generally enclosed in single or double lines.

### Group 2

In the second group of later seals, about the sixteenth century and later, there is no particular uniformity as regards shape, as can be seen in **Table 3B** and **Cat. 454ff**. In this group the inscriptions are often in *nastaʿlīq*, generally in continuous lines. In many cases the inscription has to be read from the last line up; this is particularly characteristic of seals in *nastaʿlīq* script.

A device that is frequently found is the division of the inscription into two parts, often using the return of the letter *yaʿ* (**Cat. 415, 423**). The seals are frequently decorated with scrolling stems and floral motifs around the inscription – some extremely finely executed (**Cat. 427**).

In terms of content they follow the same pattern as the early Arabic seals: names and phrases or phrases alone. A number combine Arabic with Persian; for example, **Cat. 436** has the name of the owner of the seal and a verse from the Qurʾān in Arabic, and around the margin a proverb in Persian. The inscriptions include a number of proverbs: ‘Whoever does good or bad, whatsoever good or bad he does, in turn he receives’. A *Hadīth* of the Prophet translated into Persian is engraved on **Cat. 442** and there are a significant number which refer to the family of the Prophet, particularly those revered by the Shīʿa. ‘Āʾisha, one of the Prophet’s wives, is referred to as ‘the spirit of the rose bud in the rose garden’ (**Cat. 437**). Characteristic is the phrase that so-and-so is the ‘dust under the sole of the foot of Muḥammad’ (**Cat. 438**). Another feature of the inscription is the dual use of the names of Muḥammad ‘Alī and Abū Bakr, for example. Thus: ‘the dust on the feet of the dog of ‘Alī, the servant Darwīsh’ (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: no. 72). The owner of the seal is likely to be Darwīsh ‘Alī (**Cat. 471**), but he is making a deliberate reference here to the revered Caliph/Imam Alī. Where they survive, the mounts for the later seals often have a ring so they could be attached to a cord (**Table 3C**).

### Provenance

As to place of production, we have little information by way of provenance. An exception to this is the collection of brass seals acquired by Wilkinson in Iran (see below) and it can therefore be assumed that they were made somewhere in Iran. A particular difficulty arises, however, in regard to seals with Shīʿa associations, as to whether they were made in Iran or in India, where there were Shīʿī communities in the Deccan, the Punjab and elsewhere. A number of seals in the Cunningham or Auckland collections acquired in India exemplify this difficulty, such is the closeness of design and content to those of the more straightforwardly Iranian seals. It also cannot be assumed that, even if a Shīʿī seal were found in India, it could not have been taken there by an Iranian merchant, for example – or indeed *vice versa*. For the purposes of this catalogue, therefore, those seals which have been found in India but which have these Shīʿī associations are mostly catalogued with the Iranian seals.

### Dates on seals

Seals bearing dates start to appear from the end of the fourteenth century. The earliest published is a seal inscribed with the name of the amir of Azerbaijan Mīranshāh, dated 802/1399–1400, in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Ivanov 1996: no. 187). In the Hermitage is also a seal in the name of the Ghāzi sultan Shumkhāl, dated 906/1500–1 (Ivanov 1995: 247), and another with Shīʿa inscriptions, dated 926/1519–20 (Ivanov 1996: no. 190). The earliest dated seal in the British Museum bears the date 986/1578–9 (**Cat. 450**). Throughout the catalogue all dates are AD or in the form AH/AD, unless otherwise specified.

The dated seals in the British Museum have been treated together as a unit and catalogued chronologically. They are, however, divided into two groups, the first made of stones such as chalcedony or carnelian, the second group of brass. In both groups, the inscriptions are in Arabic or Persian in cursive scripts, predominantly *nastaʿlīq*. A number of them have rhyming inscriptions in various metres that are noted in the entries. Also included are a number of seals engraved on both sides which also bear dates. Treating the dated seals in this way, rather than incorporating them within their type categories, highlights their use as potential tools for dating the vast body of seals which bear no dates. The brass seals are treated separately as they form a unified group, generally with names and often with figural motifs as part of the design. A number of seals bear incomplete dates in which one or two numerals have been left off. This is usually the initial one and/or zero and corresponds to this phenomenon on coins.

### Scope and arrangement of the catalogue

The method that has been used for the arrangement of the seals basically follows the system adopted by Ludvik Kalus in his catalogues of the collections of the Ashmolean Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Benjamin Zucker collection (Kalus 1981; Kalus 1986; Content 1987). Kalus established a workable system whereby the material is divided into two broad chronological groups, an early period he calls ‘the classical period’, which runs up to c. 1300 and a later one from 1300 onwards, which he calls ‘post-classical’. Within these categories he divides the seals by type of inscription: names, names and phrases, and so on. This is the principle followed here: although an arrangement according to epigraphic style was at first attempted in the initial stages of the compilation of this catalogue, it was soon abandoned because of the wide variety of styles in evidence.

The term ‘seal’ is used to describe the seal matrices, which are engraved in reverse. ‘Sealing’ is used for the material that has been impressed with a seal. The latter, made of lead and clay, come first in the catalogue. These are followed by the seals, which are made from a variety of gem stones or metal. As the majority of examples of seals catalogued here are ring bezels, now largely separated from their rings, the term ‘bezel’ is rarely included in the entry.

The second part of the catalogue comprises the collection of amulets. The main characteristic of these is that they are mostly inscribed ‘in positive’ so as to be read without inversion. A small but significant group of them are, however, engraved ‘in negative’. The images of these have been reversed.

The individual catalogue entries in each of the two parts (‘Seals’ and ‘Amulets’) are identified by a single running

number in a series that goes straight through from beginning to end of each part: to distinguish between the two parts, the Amulet numbers are prefixed with the letter 'A'. The entries consist of a description of the substance of the stone according to the information supplied by Sylvia Humphrey and Janet Ambers, together with its basic shape. A simple description of the inscription follows: the style of script, the number of lines and ornaments if any.

### Images of Seals in the Catalogue

The images of the seals have been reversed so that they can be more easily read.

### Arabic

Although the early inscriptions generally have no diacritical marks to differentiate letters, the Arabic transcription represents the most likely reading, with suggested variations in the English commentary. In conformity with other publications the *hamza* (which does not appear on the early seals), the *alif madda* and the *tā' marbūta* (which is not differentiated from the letter *hā'* in its final form) are all represented in the Arabic. However *tashdīd*, other than on Allah, is not represented, unless it actually appears. In general terms the Arabic transcriptions appear for the sense as continuous lines; only in the case of longer texts are they transcribed as they appear on the objects. In the English transcription *bin* (son of) is written as b.

### Recording the inscription

The system for recording the inscription is based on the simple method adopted by Sharon in his *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (CIAP):

[... ] Square brackets in the Arabic and English texts are used to enclose letters or words which are missing, either because the text is worn or defaced or because the seal has been cut down and part of the inscription is lost.

(?) is used after a reading where the translation and interpretation are considered uncertain.

### Transliteration

The following scheme is used:

ḍ	ض	' *	أ
t	ط	b	ب
z	ظ	t	ت
‘	ع	th	ث
gh	غ	j	ج
f	ف	h	ح
q	ق	kh	خ
k	ك	d	د
l	ل	dh	ذ
m	م	r	ر
n	ن	z	ز
h	ه	s	س
w	و	sh	ش
y	ي	ṣ	ص

\* Only in the middle or end of a word

**Note:** The names of dynasties – Abbasid, Fatimid and others – are not transliterated and are treated as anglicised words. Words which have entered English vocabulary are not transliterated, such as imam, sultan, amir, dinar etc., nor are more well-known place names such as Baghdad or Damascus.

### Qur'ān and Ḥadīth references

The text used here is Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, in which the order of the *sūras* follows the Egyptian edition of the Qur'ān adopted in 1924. References to the Qur'ān give the *sura* number followed by the verse reference: for example, Qur'ān 2: 255. For the translation I have generally used Alan Jones (2007). For the Qur'ānic Concordance, I have used almost entirely Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Baqī's, *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahris* (Cairo 1417/1996). This is referred to in the catalogue as *Concordance*.

### The British Museum collection

With over 800 items, the British Museum's collection of Arabic and Persian seals and amulets includes a number of important individual collections which were donated to or acquired by the British Museum at various times. The earliest is a group of amulets and Persian seals acquired by Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753), the British physician and collector whose vast collection of antiquities formed the basis of the British Museum when it was founded by Act of Parliament in 1753 (Impey 1994). In the Sloane register<sup>47</sup> there are 20 items listed in addition to four that are set into rings, three of which are Persian.<sup>48</sup> It is unclear how Sloane came to acquire these objects. Impey describes his 'Eastern' works of art which include Far Eastern as well as Middle Eastern (Islamic) material as being acquired 'almost by accident' and which were objects that would then 'have been perceived as curiosities or would have been acquired for their significance in some other field' (Impey 1994: 222). He did acquire a series of Turkish paintings (OA 1928.0323.046; MacGregor 1994: 225) and two groups of Persian paintings obtained by the German physician Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716), who travelled in Iran in Isfahan in 1685 and whose papers (in addition to botanical drawings, specimens and shells acquired in Japan and elsewhere) were purchased by Sloane after his death (OA 1928.0323.0.1–9; MacGregor 1994: 23–4). The most important of his Middle Eastern acquisitions, however, was an astrolabe made in 1712 for the last Safavid ruler, Shāh Ḥusayn (1694–1722) (OA+ 369; Morley 1856; Gunther 1932: 147–8). Sloane was extremely interested in the history of science and had acquired two other astrolabes (MacGregor 1994: 213ff. and 226). It is possible that the amulets were obtained at the same time as the Shāh Ḥusayn astrolabe in Iran, although there is no information about the circumstances of this acquisition either. The amulets form a unified group (three of them have specifically Shī'ī inscriptions), while the seals are inscribed in Persian. Sloane also appears to have been interested in the content of the inscriptions, as in the archive register these have all been translated into Latin. These translations appear to have been done by Salomon Negri of Damascus (also known as Sulaiman ibn Ya'kub al-Shami al-Salibani) who may have been responsible for cataloguing Sloane's Islamic coins.<sup>49</sup>

In respect of the collections of Islamic seals and amulets made and acquired by the British Museum in the nineteenth



century, much of the credit for their acquisition lies with Augustus Wollaston Franks (d.1897), the first Keeper of the department entitled 'British and Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography' and who is regarded after Sloane as the 'second founder' of the British Museum (Wilson 1997: 1). It was the breadth of his interests and his close contacts with a number of the prominent collectors of his day that ensured that key objects and entire collections entered the British Museum – some 3,000 objects – that now form the cornerstone of the collections of Islamic art and antiquities (Ward 1997: 272). They include those of John Henderson (1797–1878), for example, one of the earliest collectors of Islamic art in Britain (Ward 1997: 277); Frederic Du Cane Godman (1834–1919) (Ward 1997: 278); Felix Slade (1790–1868); and – important in the present context – the collections of Henry Christy and the Duc de Blacas. Franks also acquired Islamic works of art for himself, and in the collection he bequeathed to the British Museum were 20 Islamic seals and amulets.<sup>50</sup>

The acquisition of the collection of the Duc de Blacas is one of the most significant not only for the Islamic collections but for the British Museum as a whole.<sup>51</sup> It was bought by the museum in 1866 (much to the fury of the French press at the time), the sale negotiated by Charles Newton (Milanese 2005; Wilson 2002: 50–1). There were two generations of collectors amongst the Dukes of Blacas. The first was Pierre Louis Casimir (b.1770), Ambassador of Louis XVIII. His son Louis (d.1866) added greatly to his father's collection by acquiring a number of important collections. He was particularly interested in gems and coins (Edwards 1870: 689–92). According to M. Reinaud, who catalogued part of his collection, his Arabic and Persian seals and amulets were acquired by Colonel Rottiers (1771–1858), a French soldier who took part in a number of campaigns including the Russian invasion of Iran in 1812. In 1825 Rottiers directed a 'scientific mission' to the Middle East. He travelled in the region extensively and in 1829 published his *Itinéraire de Tiflis à Constantinople*. As to the Islamic gems he collected, he clearly had a discerning eye as there are some extremely fine examples in the group. However, it is evident from Franks' report on the Blacas collection that a number of the 'less important engraved stones' were 'turned out of the collection by the late Duc de Blacas and replaced by others'. Of the 129 engraved gems in the collection of the Duc de Blacas, 56 are in the British Museum. Many of these were published in volume 2 of Reinaud's *Monuments Arabes, Persans et Turcs* (1828). Reinaud was a prodigious scholar and his catalogue of the gems is extraordinarily comprehensive and interesting, with transcriptions of all the gems and much useful information about Islam and Muslim customs, reflecting the state of knowledge about this subject as it existed then.

The largest single collection of seals (over 300 items) was acquired by the banker and ethnographer Henry Christy (1810–65). Of an 'ethnological turn of mind' (Christy 1865a: 286), as well as an astute businessman, Christy visited Istanbul in 1850 and was struck by the use in Turkey of loop-piled towels. On his return he persuaded his brother to construct a loom to make what is now known as towelling, and which was shown at the Great Exhibition in London of 1851. On that same journey he is said to have collected 'primitive eastern fabrics' as well as votive objects from Cyprus. Although it is unclear precisely when he began collecting the important ethnographic items that

are now in the British Museum (King 1997: 137–9; Christy 1865b), the Great Exhibition influenced him profoundly – as it did Franks – and turned his interests towards ethnology and archaeology. His major achievement was his support of a project to examine the prehistoric caves in the Vézère valley in south-west France. He not only created his own museum at 103 Victoria Street, but also gave material to other institutions. The items now known as the Christy collection, in addition to a group of Sasanian seals (Bivar 1969: 139), came to the British Museum following Christy's death in 1865. Unfortunately there is no indication of how he acquired the Islamic seals – whether as a single group from dealers in London or on his visits to the region.<sup>52</sup> The material itself can broadly be described as being from the central Islamic lands, with a large proportion of early seals.

Other groups of objects from nineteenth-century collectors include a handful of amulets acquired by the Reverend Greville Chester (1830–92), who was fascinated by Ancient Egypt, the archaeology of which was then still in its infancy. Encouraged by Samuel Birch, the specialist in Egyptology at the British Museum, Chester travelled frequently to Egypt, financing his trips by buying and selling objects. Between 1864 and 1891 he sold or gave a large number of objects to various museums, including seals and amulets to the Ashmolean museum (Kalus 1986: preface) and the British Museum.

Another collector, William Marsden (1754–1836), is well known as a linguist and scholar of the Malay world, where he traveled as a member of the East India Company. He was a founder member of the Royal Asiatic Society and a numismatist. In 1825 he published *Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*, still considered a standard work (Marsden 1823–25). In 1834 he donated his entire coin collection to the British Museum, and with them came a number of seals.

A significant group of objects – close to 100 – was acquired by the British Museum from the collection of George Eden, 3rd Baron Auckland and Governor General of India (1836–42, d.1849). The collection (registered under the year 1853) was bequeathed by his sister Emily Eden. The collection is varied and includes early Islamic seals as well as Persian and Indian seals and a small number of amulets.

An equally large number was acquired by Charles Masson (1800–53), explorer, archaeologist and intelligence agent. Masson spent five years travelling in Central Asia and Afghanistan and in 1833 was employed by the British East India Company, Bombay Government, to excavate and record finds in south-eastern Afghanistan (Errington 1999). There are a number of extremely fine examples in this group including a re-engraved Indo-Greek seal acquired at Begram in Afghanistan (**Cat. 362**).

Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Haversham Godwin-Austen (1834–1923), a topographer and geologist serving in the Indian army, was the son of Robert Alfred Cloyne Godwin-Austin (d.1884), also a prominent geologist. Henry was a fellow of the Royal Society and wrote on the zoology and geology of India.<sup>53</sup> His seals, which include a significant collection of Sasanian examples (Bivar 1969: 139), were apparently collected in north-west India between 1852 and 1877. His collection, which also includes a number of amulets, were donated to the British Museum by his niece Miss Godwin-Austen in 1943.<sup>54</sup>

A collection of metal rings and stamps and a significant

group of lead seals were acquired from Julius Richard (1816–91), who is described in the register of the collection for 1861 as ‘Secrétaire interprète, intime du Shah de Perse’. A fascinating character who spent many years in Iran, he was a photographer, translator for Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (1848–96) and the first to excavate the city of Rayy, where he also collected ceramic sherds of Persian lustre ware.<sup>55</sup> He also played an important role in the acquisition of collections of Persian Islamic art for the Victoria and Albert Museum.<sup>56</sup> He may have obtained the lead seals from the Russian General Resident of Iran, Iwan Alexejewitsch Bartholomäi (1813–70), who acquired others in Hamadān in 1858.

Much of the collection of Indian brass seals was acquired by William Stanley Talbot, who was a collector mostly of ancient Indian coins.<sup>57</sup> In 1903 he presented coins and seals to the British Museum. The register note for 1903 says that the seals belonged to ‘the court at Delhi’. This makes sense given that the bulk of them are seals of officials working for the court. The collection includes two interesting brass seals which are forgeries (**Cat. 622–623**).

Archaeologist, curator and collector Charles Kyrle Wilkinson (1897–1986) worked in Egypt and Iran, where he joined the Metropolitan Museum of Art excavations at Qaṣr-i Abū Naṣr and Nishapur, which he published in two important volumes on the ceramics and the architecture. In 1956 he became curator of the Department of Ancient Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum. He collected ceramics, metalwork and Qajar works of art, many of which he donated to the Metropolitan and Brooklyn museums (Canby, ‘Wilkinson’, Grove Art). The seals he acquired, which were donated to the museum by John Carswell, fall into the Qajar period and are an important and hitherto undocumented group. They are mostly made of brass, have figural imagery and, most importantly, bear dates.

Sir Denis Wright (d.2005) served in the diplomatic service and went in 1963 as ambassador to Tehran, where he remained until 1971. He is the author of *The English amongst the Persians* (1977) and *The Persians amongst the English* (1985). In 1994, he donated to the British Museum the interesting collection of seals and amulets that he had formed in Iran. It also includes two seals made for him and Lady Wright, engraved with their names in Persian (**Cat. 633–634**).

## Notes

- 1 The principal catalogues are Kalus 1981; Kalus 1986; Content 1987.
- 2 Cairo 1969: 40, no. 29 and *Trésors Fatimides du Caire*, no. 84. The pyramidal shape of this seal can be compared with a jet seal from Nishapur (Jenkins and Keene 1983: fig. 3a). Tarascio refers to a tourmaline seal inscribed with the name ‘Ammār, probably an official at the court of the Fatimid caliph al-‘Azīz (Tarascio 1986: 188, fig. 150).
- 3 For example, in the *Kitāb al-Muwashshā*, the chapter entitled ‘What is written on seal stones’ is *mā yuktab ‘alā al-fuṣūṣ* (p. 132). Another example is from the Arabic hermetic manuscript in the Bodleian library (MS.Arab.d.221): ‘make from this stone the bezel of a ring (*faṣṣ*) and engrave on it the symbol of Jupiter’ (Beeston 1962: 16).
- 4 In the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm* the author describes a collection of seals (*tawābi*) made from something like incense (al-Majrīfī (pseudo), 1933: 55). For the verb *ṭaba’a*, used by makers of glass stamps, see Morton 1985: 13. In Morocco the term *ṭaba’a* was used by the sixteenth-century Sa’dian Sharīfs (De Castries 1921: 231).
- 5 These include Arab–Byzantine seals with bilingual Greek and

Arabic inscriptions which are beyond the scope of this study. For a short but excellent survey of the subject, see Cheynet 1997.

- 6 Cheynet 1997: 110f. Wax was used by the Byzantines for sealing imperial documents and by the Crusaders. Metcalf (1995) discusses, for example, lead and wax Crusader seals of Cyprus. Wax seals appear to have been used in the Islamic world only in the later periods. Rabino (1945: 22) refers to a wax seal on an envelope of a royal letter of Sulaymān I, which has not survived. In India, under the later Indian princes, wax seals were attached to silk purses along with the letter.
- 7 Tifaschi 1998: 224. Tifaschi describes two types of the best agate: the *baqarawī*, known to us as sardonyx, and the *ḥabashī*, meaning Ethiopian, which is banded black and white and is known today as banded onyx.
- 8 Balādhurī 1956, vol. 3: 448 and Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 6: 278. The best carnelian apparently came from Yemen (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 12: 164). For the production of carnelian in Yemen see Inizan, Jazim and Mermier 1992. Regarding carnelian the *Ḥadīth* says, ‘Wearing a carnelian seal banishes poverty.’ If someone who has lost all his money sells his ring he will get rich. Ibn Manẓūr discusses seals in other materials: In referring to a metal seal, the Prophet said ‘Do I not see on you the appearance of the people of the fire?’ (*ahl al-nār li’annahu kāna min zay al-kuffār al-ladhīna aṣḥāb al-nār*). For a reference to the people of the fire on a seal, see **Cat. A159**.
- 9 Caliph ‘Umar is said to have banned the use of titles on rings (Soucek 2002: 243; Morony 1984: 67).
- 10 Bivar 1969: 30 from Mas‘ūdī’s *Murūj al-Dhahab*. For the use of *al-wafā* on Islamic seals in the British Museum see **Cat. 312**.
- 11 Seal texts listed by Hilāl: for ‘Umar: ‘Death is a sufficient warner O ‘Umar; for ‘Uthmān: ‘‘Uthmān believes in Allāh the Great’; for ‘Alī: ‘Allāh is the king’ (al-Ṣābi’ 1977: 103–4).
- 12 The occurrence of these particular phrases on the British Museum seals and elsewhere is noted in the relevant catalogue entries.
- 13 Cheynet 1997: 112, fig. 7/23. Cheynet remarks here, ‘It is not clear how such seals were produced without damaging the goods.’ An administrative seal stone matrix made of a slightly sparkly green hardstone is in the Khalili collection. It is inscribed ‘by permission of the treasury, the date 132/749–50 and the phrase ‘the seal of ‘Abdallāh, commander of Abbasid caliph al-Saffāh. The fact that it is inscribed ‘Abdallāh, and al-Saffāh’s name is ‘Abdallāh is not significant as here it simply means the servant of God. This was a title used by Umayyad and early Abbasid rulers (Blair 1998: 37). If this object is genuine it would be the first caliphal/administrative seal matrix known. A few bronze seal matrices are known from the Sasanian period including an example of Yazdigird I (399–420) Bivar 1969: 36, four examples cited; also Bivar 1990: 89–93.
- 14 Robinson refers to an eighteenth-century commentary on eleventh century *Kitāb al-Kharāj* in reference to this particular type of seal; ‘the manner of sealing is that a string is fastened around the neck of the *dhimmīs* and upon the knot is set lead, which is imprinted with the amount of the capitation tax, according to one of three classes (*ṭabaqāt*), 12, 24 or 48 dirhams’; Robinson 2005: 426–7.
- 15 As with the lead seals, there has been no systematic publication of this material. The largest collection of papyrus seals is in Vienna, and some were published by Karabacek in 1894. Some of these have been re-examined by Wassiliou and Harrauer (1999: 28–40); Soucek (2002: 246–8) and Kalus and Rogers (forthcoming).
- 16 For a carnelian seal with this inscription see **Cat. 217**.
- 17 Moritz 1905: no. 106. A glass stamp bearing the governor’s name is also pictured with the document.
- 18 For other examples of where the name on the seal relates directly to the document, see Ragib 1982: no. 2555, and Smith and Moraekhi 1996: 153, no. 352.
- 19 I am grateful to the late Mr Samir Shamma, who kindly helped me with the translation of this passage.
- 20 Qalqashandī (1913–18, vol. 6: 352–6) gives a history of seal practice in the Islamic lands but is not specific about seals being used in his day in Egypt. Nor is there any reference to seals on Mamluk documents discussed by Stern (1966); see also Rogers 1997: 189.
- 21 For a discussion of the *‘alāma* on documents from Norman Sicily see Johns and Jamil 2004; and on Ottoman documents from Qaṣr Ibrīm in Lower Nubia, Hinds and Menage 1991: 15–16.
- 22 These seals are described as *āl-tamghā* (Soudovar 1992: 34). Another later example in the Soudavar collection (1992: 79) is a

- decree referring to the shrine of Abū Ishāq and dated 1448; a cast bronze fourteenth-century seal inscribed in the name of the Sufi Abū Ishāq (d.1033), in the David collection, may have been used to authenticate pledges from pilgrims. Blair and Bloom argue that the style of script is derived from the Mongol script Phagspa (2006: 100). For other documents with Mongol seals, see Siouffi 1896; Pelliot 1936; Cleaves 1951; Mostaert and Cleaves 1952; De Rachewitz 1971; Komaroff and Carboni 2002: cat. 167.
- 23 The use of seals in the later period is discussed in Rogers 1997: 188–93.
  - 24 Schimkoreit 1982. Other useful works on this subject are Busse 1959, which discusses the system of issuing documents and the use of seals, and Röhrborn 1977, which includes descriptions of different types of documents and lists of royal seals. I am grateful to Alexander Morton for these references.
  - 25 See also articles by Shakeb, who has also worked on seals in manuscripts and documents (1982a, 1982b, 1990) and Desai (1993).
  - 26 Pope and Ackermann 1938–9, 3: 2605. This seal was in the Staatliches Museum, Berlin. Morton was informed that the matrix disappeared during the Second World War but that the handle survives.
  - 27 Pers. comm. from Sayyid Khalkhālī of the Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Centre, London.
  - 28 This section has been written largely by Shailendra Bhandare.
  - 29 These include Shaked 1982 and 1990; Mohiuddin 1971; Tirmizi (for seals on documents exchanged between East India company officials and rulers from across the Islamic world in the latter part of the nineteenth century). John Seyller is in the process of writing an exhaustive work on this subject which has the working title of *A Corpus of Indo-Islamic Seals*.
  - 30 These include: Qeyamuddin Ahmad 1961; Bivar 1961; Kaus 1965; Kaus, 1967; Kaus, 1968; Kaus 1969.
  - 31 A record of the impressions of some of these seals can be found in Felix 1916: 699–702; British Library manuscript Eur D693/1 and 2. A discussion of East India company seals is in Morgan (1991a and b); Dymond date.
  - 32 There is a remarkable but brief moment during the tenth to eleventh centuries when signed coins proliferate. These signatures are found on Buyid coins – particularly from the reign of Muʿayyad al-Dawla ruling Hamadan and Isfahan (977–83) – on Samanid coins and coins of the Volga Bulgars. In the British Museum is also a Kakwayhid period coin with a signature from the mint of Sāpūr (BM reg. no. 1905 10–12 137). See Bier 1979; Heidemann 1993: 41–4; Rispling 1989. For signatures on glass stamps see Morton 1985: 13.
  - 33 There is a strong connection between seals and Yemen. The best carnelian was believed to come from Yemen, and was particularly favoured by the Prophet (see above, ‘Islam, The Prophet’s Seal’; for Yemeni carnelian see Inizan *et al.* 1992).
  - 34 ‘My bosom has been filled with so many mounds of the love of the beauties that it came to resemble a seal engravers’ book’ (Acar 1999: 291).
  - 35 The knot motif appears on fourteenth-century Ilkhanid coins, particularly of Abū Saʿīd (1316–35), e.g. Lane Poole 1881: no. 219, struck in 728/1327–8; and on seals, for example, Kalus 1987: 322, no. 91.
  - 36 Ploug *et al.* 1969: 76–81, 175 and 181 (level A: 1302–1401).
  - 37 King Saud University, Riyadh, unpublished.
  - 38 Tegdaoust 1983: 442. The seal is in a script described as ‘un coufique fleuri almoravide’. The authors suggest, principally on the basis of the epigraphic style, that the seal arrived in Tegdaoust between 1100 and 1150. I am grateful to Prof. Paulo Farrias for this reference.
  - 39 It should be said at the outset, however, that to use, for example, the epigraphic style of a dated stone inscription to date an inscription on a seal can be hazardous, for we know that epigraphic developments occurred on different materials at different times and in different regions. It is pointed out by Tabbāa (1994: pt 2, 119), for instance, that the transition from angular to cursive took place on monumental inscriptions almost a century after it occurred in Qurʾāns.
  - 40 Walker 1956. On the copper coins there is quite a variation in style and size of script within this broad category, which does not appear in silver and gold, confirming the view that copper coinage on the whole has the status of local currency, whereas silver and gold coins were evidently subject to the rigours of the mint master, who must have controlled the standard of the engraving of die inscriptions. This was similarly noted above in the context of figural representation on coins, and can also be paralleled on the seals: there are seals which are beautifully inscribed, rather like the precious metal coins, while others are in cruder, more careless scripts. For glass stamps see Morton 1985.
  - 41 Blair and Bloom (1997: 65) comment on a milestone dated AH 692 where the spacing occurs in the middle of the word rather than at the end.
  - 42 For recent work on the use of dots in Arabic, see Kaplony 2008.
  - 43 This feature was first drawn attention to by Helen Brown in Horton *et al.* 1986, where she also discussed it in connection with Fatimid coins. For the rhyming inscriptions on seals in the *Kitāb al-Murwashshā*, see above.
  - 44 This is also true for seals in other collections, where the denoting of *nisbas* is seldom seen in the early group. A rare example is Kalus 1981: 29, no. 1.3.33, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Ṣarafī.
  - 45 See also for example, Kalus 1981: 48, no. 1.2.3.5 Ḥusayn al-Mūsawī. This is still the practice today. Al-Sayyid, Saʿīd al-Khalkhālī (Imam Al-Khoei Islamic Centre, London) has ‘al-Mūsawī’ engraved on his seal to show that he is descended from the seventh imam Mūsā.
  - 46 Jade, which is particularly associated with the Timurids, has a long history of use in the Iranian world. Melikian-Chirvani has published a number of objects including a twelfth-century costume fitting and fourteenth-century jade amulets (Melikian-Chirvani 2000: 146–58).
  - 47 British Museum archive register number 28h 251. There are marginal notes done by Franks in 1861.
  - 48 Franks evidently went through the Sloane register placing his initials and the date next to the ones he found in 1861 and another one he found in 1893.
  - 49 It was suggested that the astrolabe ‘found its way to Europe after the sacking of the Safavid palace following the fall of the Shah Husayn in 1722’. There is nothing to corroborate this, however. The information on the translator of the amulets comes from a report to the BM Trustees General Meeting on 2nd February 1754. I am grateful to Marjorie Caygill for this.
  - 50 Registered under 1893 4–26 160–179. Franks’ drawings and casts of seals are in the Society of Antiquaries Proceedings NS XVI (1897): 416.
  - 51 Officers Reports Charles Newton March 1867. Also October 1866; Librarian’s report 6 December 1866; Minute references 13 October 1866 c. 11,087; 8 December 1866 c. 11,115–16; 12 Jan 1876 c. 11,130; 12 Jan 1876 11,143.
  - 52 We know of the one visit to Istanbul in 1850 and one to Algeria in 1863. Christy 1865: 286.
  - 53 For example, ‘Descriptions of the animals of two land shells from Perak’, *London Malacological Society* vol. 8, part 6, September 1909. For his father, see the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 22, 1890: 69.
  - 54 The register note adds that Godwin-Austen originally acquired them from a ‘Mason’ of the Calcutta Museum. It is possible that this was Charles Masson.
  - 55 Reports to the Trustees 1887–8, 131.
  - 56 Through General Sir Robert Murdoch-Smith, from whom significant collections, particularly of ceramics, were acquired.
  - 57 His collection was sold at auction at Sotheby Wilkinson and Hodge, 2 August 1887, on behalf of the Governor of India.



Table 1: Epigraphic Styles on Seals

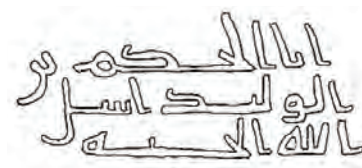
## A: Simple angular style, letters widely spaced c. 7th–8th century

Cat. 9 8th century  
Year 95/713–4

Cat. 271



Cat. 204

Morton 1985: no. 10 (1893 2–5 87)  
8th century glass stamp: Usama b. Zayd ordered  
a half *qist*, full measure. 714–7 and 720–1Al-Kilabi 1430/2009: no. 86  
7th century inscription on rock: al-Ḥakam b. al-Walīd  
asks God for paradise (*as'al Allāh al-jinna*)

## B: Simple angular style, narrow spacing c. 8th–9th century



Cat. 46



Cat. 56



Cat. 58



Cat. 64



Cat. 74



Cat. 281



Cat. 8 (detail)



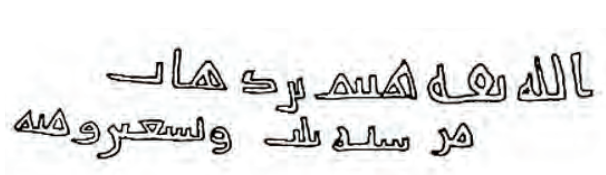
Cat. 177

Cat. 19 Early 9th century.  
Year 192/807–8

Cat. 232 (detail)



Cat. 274

Walker 1956: no. 413  
(1905 12–12 21)  
Struck in Nishapur  
Year 90/708–9Morton 1985: 383  
(OA+4280) Glass stamp:  
Iḍrīs and Mūsā, sons of  
Mahdī, c. 9th centuryAl-Kilabi 1430/2009: no. 124 Early 9th century inscription on rock:  
Allāh is the trust of Haytham b. Dhahhāb. Year 193/808–9

## Table 1 cont.

## C: Angular scripts with wedge-shaped and foliate terminals c. 9th–12th centuries



Cat. 122



Cat. 38



Cat. 293



Cat. 112



Cat. 277



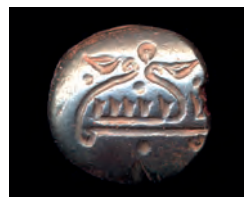
Cat. 32



Cat. 310



Cat. 159



Cat. 265



Cat. 108



Cat. 223



Cat. 341



1881 5–4 31 Dirham of  
Abbasid caliph al-Qāhir (932–  
34). Struck in al-Wāsiṭ. Year  
321/933



1854 8–19 59 Dinar of Abbasid caliph al-Musta'ṣim  
(1242–58). Struck in Madīnat al-Salām (Baghdad).  
Year 643/1245

D: Angular-cursive scripts and into *naskh* c. 10th century to 13th century and later

Cat. 45



Cat. 336



Cat. 313



Cat. no 359



Cat. 353



1849 11–21 300 Dinar of Ayyubid ruler al-Kāmil (1218–38). Struck in  
al-Qāhira (Cairo). Year 625/1227–8



Table 2: Ornamentation

## A: Early seals c. 8th–14th centuries



Cat. 42



Cat. no. 71



Cat. 114



Cat. 314



Cat. 226



Cat. 218



Cat. 261



Cat. 311



Cat. 316



Cat. 220



Cat. 296



Cat. 347

## B: Later seals c. 15th–19th centuries



Cat. 384



Cat. 386



Cat. 426



Cat. 425



Cat. 434



Cat. 450 Dated 986/1578–9



Cat. 452 Dated 1030/1620



Cat. 466 Dated 1179/1765–6



Cat. 567 Dated 1161/1748–9

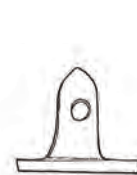


Cat. 568 Dated 1171/1757–8



Cat. 542 Dated 1321/1903–4



**Table 3: Shapes and Mounts****A: Shapes, early seals, c. 8th–10th century****Cat. 35** Rectangular seal with barrel-shaped top, flat base and bevelled sides**Cat. 36** Seal cut *en cabochon***Cat. 41** Seal cut *en cabochon***Cat. 69** Rectangular seal, flattish top, flat base and straight sides**Cat. 200** Octagonal seal with bevelled sides, cut down**B: Shapes, later seals****Cat. 382** Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides**Cat. 395** Hexagonal seal, flat top and base with bevelled sides**Cat. 454** Oval seal, flat top and base with bevelled sides**Cat. 459** Rectangular seal, flat top and base with bevelled sides**Cat. 480** Pear-shaped seal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Dated 1235/1819–20**C: Examples of mounts****Cat. 86** Bronze, long mount, hole for suspension and coiled wire, c. 9th–10th century**Cat. 205** Lead tin bronze, engraved on the face and base of the mount, c. 9th–12th century**Cat. 533** Brass seal with hole for suspension, 9th century**Cat. 492** Carnelian seal set into silver mount, dated 1257/1841–2

# 1. Clay, bronze and lead sealings c. eighth–tenth centuries

The objects in this category are stamped from matrices and were used for a number of different purposes: there are clay pieces, possibly tokens or receipts; a rare bulla bearing fourteen different stamps and bronze and lead examples fastened to documents, sacks or even people (see Introduction p. 4). They are arranged by material, and the lead sealings by region and where possible chronologically.

## Clay sealings

1



Baked clay. Round with curved base. It is inscribed in simple angular script on four sides. A six-pointed star is in the centre.

This is one of three seals, two of which are in the British Museum, with a third in the Ashmolean Museum (Kalus 1986: no. I.4.1: 45). Like this example, the Ashmolean example was acquired by the Rev. Greville Chester in Egypt and came into the Ashmolean collection in 1891. All three were clearly struck by the same die; none has yet been satisfactorily deciphered.

15 × 13 × 5 mm  
1893 11–11 1. Acquired from the Rev. Greville Chester

2



As above.

15 × 13 × 4 mm  
1999 2–5 1. Presented by Les Riches

3



Baked clay. Round with curved base. The seal has been impressed into the centre of the clay, which forms a wide band around the impression. The inscription in angular script is on three sides of a triangle with a six-petalled rosette in the centre. The last part of the name is unclear.

أحمد بن  
محمد بن  
سليمان

Lines 1–3: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sulayman (?)

21 × 20 × 7 mm  
1861 6–28 35

4



Baked clay. Round with irregular base. It is inscribed in thick cursive script on two lines.

حسين  
ثقة

Lines 1–2: Ḥusayn trust

*Thiqa* appears to be the most likely reading for the second line, the initial letter *thā'* is written with a flourish.

13 × 5 × 5 mm (max.)  
1861 6–28 36

5



Baked clay. Round with a thumbprint on the back. Inscribed on three lines in angular script with wedge-shaped and forked terminals.

بن  
أحمد  
محمد

Lines 1–3: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad

The style of script and layout of the inscription relates this to seal matrices in the catalogue; for example Cat. 46 or 157.

15 × 3 × 5 mm  
1984 6–12 6. Presented by Stephen Album



6



Baked clay. Round with a thumbprint on the back. The inscription in angular script on one line stands out in relief.

حسن

The most likely reading is Ḥasan inscribed in reverse.

23 × 7 × 3 mm

1984 6–12 4. Presented by Stephen Album

7



Baked clay. Round with slightly rounded base. The inscription is in angular script, very similar in style to *Cat. 6*, and stands out in relief.

محمد

The most likely reading is Muḥammad inscribed in reverse.

17 × 4 × 2 mm

1984 6–12 5. Presented by Stephen Album

8



Clay bulla, round irregular, pierced at the back with four holes. It is stamped with 14 separate seals, not all of which are legible and some are repetitions. Nicolas Lowick read some of them and his readings were reproduced in Tampoe 1989 (fig. 43). For the Siraf finds, see Priestman forthcoming.

1. سليمان بن حربويه
2. زياد بن يزيد
3. مهر بن م[...]
4. مغيث بن ابي سعيد
5. عز بن محار
6. [...] بن محار
7. زيد بن [...]
8. خمار [...]
9. زيد بن [...]
10. خالد بن سعيد
- 11–14

1. Sulaiman b. Ḥarbūyah
2. Ziyād b. Yazīd
3. Mihr b. M[...]
4. Mughīth b. Abī Saʿīd
5. ʿIzz b. Maḥār
6. [...] b. Maḥār
7. Zaid b. [...]
8. Khumār ? [...]
9. As number 7.
10. Khālīd b. Saʿīd
- 11–14. Illegible or blank.

34 × 35 × 12 mm  
2007 60–1 10680

## Bronze sealing

9



Bronze. Round seal inscribed in angular script and dated 95/713–4; Umayyad period, reign of Walīd I (705–715).

Side A

من اهل مصر

Side B

سنة خمس و تسعين

Side A: From the people of Miṣr (Egypt)

Side B: Year 95

For a discussion of this seal, see Introduction, p. 4.

17 × 5 mm

String canal: 3–9 o'clock

1922 9–8 1. Presented by the Egypt Exploration Fund, said to have been found at Kantara, Egypt, about 1884. Published by Walker (1956: 295)

## Lead sealings from Syria, Palestine and North Africa

10



Lead. Thin, round seal with protrusion. Inscribed on one side in two lines with widely spaced angular script typical of the Umayyad period.

الملك  
لله

The kingdom belongs to God

For the appearance of this phrase on seals and elsewhere, see **Cat. 289ff.**

18 × 2 mm

1983 9–17 2 (1861 12–21 26). Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

11



Lead. Inscribed on one side with three lines of simple angular script.

حلا [حل]  
ارض  
فلسطين

Lines 1–3: Ḥulāḥil (?) The land (*arḍ*) of Palestine

There are a number of seals known with this inscription in the Limbada collection and elsewhere. Impressions of these are in the British Museum. The meaning of the first word is open to interpretation. As *ḥulāḥil* it is found in Ibn Manẓūr's *Lisān al-'Arab* (1994, vol. 11: 174), where the *ḥulāḥil* is described as '*al-sayyid fī 'ashūratihī al-shujā' al-rakīn fī majlisihī*': 'the lord of his clan who is brave and steadfast in his domain' (the *majlis* is the sitting or gathering room where he is host). Lane (1893, vol. 1, pt. 2: 621) translates the term similarly as a 'chief among his kinsfolk', also with the additional connotations of bravery and manly virtues. The occurrence of this term in the context of the lead seal might suggest that the *ḥulāḥil* may have had some kind of administrative function as well. However, the term is not known in other administrative or historical contexts. Perhaps more likely is that it is a place name yet to be determined.

The phrase *arḍ Falasṭīn* also occurs on eleventh-century administrative documents from Syria. Sourdel defines the term *arḍ* in this context as 'qui implique l'existence, autour de chacun de ces emplacements, de terres en dépendant et sur lesquelles travaillaient les gens de la dite localité' (Sourdel 1972: 274). In administrative terms, the extent of territory determined by the term *arḍ* is likely to be

equivalent to the *jund*, the military district of the same name (Le Strange 1890: 28–30).

19 × 7 × 9 mm

String canal: 11–6 o'clock

1998 4–36 1. Presented by Shrāga Qedar

12



Lead seal inscribed on two sides in angular script.

Side A

[1–2] إقليم السدير كورة  
بلنيس  
حمص

Side B

Side A (lines 1–2): *iqīm* of al-S-d-y-r (?)  
*kūra* of...  
(line 3): Bulunyās  
(line 4): Ḥimṣ

The reading proposed here for the *iqīm* is the as yet unidentified al-S-d-y-r. Bulunyās, which is proposed for the *kūra*, is mentioned as one of the six *kūras* of Homs by Ibn al-Faqīh (1885: 111). 'A small town and fortress' as described by Yāqūt, situated on the sea close to Homs; in ancient times it was known as Balanea and was incorporated into the *jund* of Homs at the Arab conquest (Le Strange 1890: 424–5; Sourdel-Thomine, 'Bāniyās', EI<sup>2</sup>). Balādhurī, in the context of Homs, mentions Bulunyās and says that 'this is the place name of the coastal city of Syria that is now called Bāniyās' (al-Balādhurī

(ed. Munajjid) 1956, vol. 1: 158; vol. 3: 696). There is another Bāniyās, ancient Paneas, east of Tyre, which is often confused with it (Sharon 1999: 22–83).

Side B (within a dotted border): B-d-n-ū-s (?)

It is not clear whether this is the name of a place or a person. The *-ūs* ending suggests that it might be a Greek name. Dimashqī describes Bulunyās as 'a town dating from Hebrew, Greek and Roman days and there are likely to have been Christian populations there still' (Le Strange 1890: 424).

27 × 26 × 3 mm

String canal: 2–9 o'clock

OR 5289

13



Rectangular lead seal inscribed in angular script on both sides in the name of the Aghlabid amir Muḥammad II b. Aḥmad (250–261/863–75) and dated either 257/870–1 or 259/8723.

Side A

مما امر به  
الامير محمد  
[بن احمد]

Side B

تسع/ سنة سبع  
و خمسين  
ومائتين

Side A (lines 1–3): Among what has been ordered by Amīr Muḥammad [bin Aḥmad]

Side B (lines 1–3): Year 257 or 259



This is one of a type of seal first published by Balog (1979), which he identified as bearing the names of ninth- to tenth-century Aghlabid amirs of North Africa and Sicily. The frequency of the dates suggested to Balog that these were poll tax seals (see Introduction, p. 4). Two examples dated 152/866 are published by Tarascio (1986: 190–191).

18 × 14 × 4 mm  
String canal: 12–6 o'clock  
2000 8–41 1

### *Eastern Islamic world: Abbasid and Buyid sealings*

14



Lead seal inscribed on one side in angular script in the field and around the margins. There are cloth marks on the back.

Centre

محمد بن  
هاشم

Margin

امر/الله/بالوفا/والعدل

Centre: Muḥammad b. Hāshim

Margin: Ordered God in fairness and justice

The phrase *bi'l wafā wa'l 'adl* is found for example on a number of Umayyad copper coins bearing the names of officials, struck in Kufa in the first half of the eighth century (Walker 1956: 278–9). The phrase also occurs on glass stamps (Morton 1985: 62ff.). The use of this phrase goes back to the pre-Islamic era: the Sasanian ruler Khusrau Anushirvān had a seal for the postal service engraved in Persian *al-wafā'* (Bivar 1969: 30).

17 × 18 × 3 mm  
String canal: 12–5 o'clock  
1983 9–17 3

15



Unevenly shaped lead seal inscribed with three lines of angular script.

مما امر به  
الامير  
صلح

Lines 1–3: Among what has been ordered by Amīr Šāliḥ (?)

(The name is uncertain. If it is Šāliḥ, the *alif* is omitted.)

23 × 22 × 2 mm  
String canal: 9–3 o'clock  
1983 9–17 1

16



Lead seal inscribed in angular script in the central field and around the margin, probably dated 155/771–2. This falls into the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr (136–158/754–75). There are cloth marks on the back.

Margin

مما امر الامير موسى بن [...] سنة خمس وخمسين ومئة

Centre

[...] اقليم  
(?) كورة  
طبا [...]

Margin: Among what has been ordered by Amīr Mūsā b. [...] in the year 155

(For the use of the phrase *mimmā amara bihi*, see Blair 1998: 32f.)

The *iqḷīm* and *kūra* are still unidentified.

30 × 28 × 3 mm  
String canal: 12–6 o'clock  
OR 5290

17



Round flattish lead seal inscribed on both sides in angular script. On side A is a U-shaped ornament with a dot above it. It is dated 158/775–6. This falls into the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (775–85).

Side A  
Centre

اثنا عشر

Margin

[...] سنة ثمان وخمسين ومئة

Side B

[...] سلمه

Margin

[...] بركة الامير ابي الحسن [...]

Side A (centre): Twelve  
(Margin): Year 158

Side B is unclear and probably includes a name, possibly Sulma or Salāma  
(Margin): Blessings. Amīr Abī al-Ḥasan

A lead seal published by Mitchiner (1977: 478, no. 4005) is similarly inscribed *ithnā 'ashar*. This presumably refers to twelve

dirhams, a commonly used rate for the payment of the *jizya* tax (Robinson 2005: 426–7).

24 × 2 mm

String canal: This does not appear to have gone right through; the only hole is at the base (5 o'clock).

C&M 1970 10–16 1. Presented by N. du Quesne Bird

18



Lead seal struck on one side. It is inscribed in angular script in the centre and around the margin. It is dated 175/791–2. This falls into the reign of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (170–193/786–809).

Centre

ابراهيم

Margin

خاتم ما [...] سنة خمس /  
وسبعين / ومئة

Centre and margins: Ibrāhīm.

This was read by Nicholas Lowick as *khātīm mārah* (?) *kūrat Rayy* ('the stamp of (?) the *kūra* of Rayy'), which is unclear. Another possibility is *khātīm Māh al-Baṣra* year [1]75. Ibrāhīm is written with the *alif* omitted.

18 × 24 × 6 mm

String canal: 6–12 o'clock

1983 9–17 4

19



Lead seal of irregular form struck on one side, inscribed in angular script on seven lines in the name of Amīr al-Mu'tamin al-Qāsim, and dated 192/807–8. Cloth marks on the other side.

[ب] اسم الله مما [مر]  
[به] الامير المؤتمن و [ل] ي  
عهد ال [م] سلمين  
[ا] لقسم بن امير [ا] لمؤ  
[م] نين ايقاه الله س [ذ] نة  
[ا] ثذ [ب] ان وتسعين [و]  
مائة حرز [ه] الله

Lines 1–7: In the name of God/ this was ordered/ by Amīr al-Mu'tamin Heir/ Apparent of the Muslims/ al-Qasim [*sic*] son of the Commander of the/ Faithful may God preserve him in the [year]/ 19[2] may God preserve him

This seal was read and identified by Cécile Bresc as being stamped in the name of al-Qāsim, a little-known son of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, three years after his nomination in 189/804–5 as heir apparent with the *laqab* al-Mu'tamin, and one year before his father's death (Bresc 2003). It represents the first known usage by al-Qāsim of his official title of *walī 'ahd al-muslimīn*. Governor of the strategic provinces of Jazīra, al-Thughūr, and al-Awāsim until 194/810–11, al-Qāsim played a minor role in the fratricidal war between his two brothers al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn (in which he joined), and died according to Ibn al-Athīr in 208/823–4. Bresc argues that this seal is likely to have been struck in one of these provinces, from where al-Qāsim launched several raids into Byzantine territories. Like the other specimens with cloth marks on the back, it is tempting to suggest that this was sealed onto a purse or money bag – perhaps the salary of the troops under his command.

25 × 20 mm

String canal: 3–6 o'clock

2010 20–19 1. Presented by Jeffrey Spier

20



Square lead seal struck on one side with seven lines of angular script, the words joined up to form continuous lines. In the name of 'Alī b. Salm (?) and Ibrāhīm b. Dā'ūd and dated 212/827–8, which falls into the Abbasid period, the reign of caliph al-Ma'mūn (189–218/813–33).

مما امر به  
[الا] مير علي بن سلم (?)  
مولا امير المؤمنين  
على يدي ابراهيم بن دا  
ود سنة اثنا عشره ومائتين  
شهد به

Lines 1–7: Among what was ordered by the *amīr* 'Alī b. Salm (?), *mawlā* of the Commander of the Faithful. By the hand of Ibrāhīm b. Dā'ūd in the year 212. He witnessed it

The term *mawlā* has a variety of meanings and connotations at different times. In pre-Islamic Arabia, it meant a relative. In the Qur'ān it refers to a helper. Under the early Abbasids, when it can be loosely translated as 'client', as *mawlā amīr al-mu'minīn*, Crone has argued that the term denoted one of the ranks of the Abbasid aristocracy, who were in most cases non-Arab and freedmen – a group particularly trusted by the early Abbasid caliphs. She also argues that the term then became a common honorific (*laqab*) (Crone, 'Mawla', EI<sup>2</sup>). Elad, on the other hand, has argued on the basis of a number of prominent Arabs working for the Abbasids described by this term that it does not exclusively refer to non-Arabs (Elad 1999: 56–9). For the phrase '*alā yaday*' see below, Cat. 23.

19 × 19 × 4 mm

String canal: 12–6 o'clock

1983 9–17 5. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861



21



Rectangular lead seal inscribed on one side in the centre and around the sides in angular script. Unclear. There is a cloth imprint on the back.

Centre

السري  
بن معاذ

Margin

خاتم [...] سنة اربع واربعين ومئتين [...]

Centre and margin: This was tentatively read by Nicholas Lowick as *al-Sirrīb. Mu'ādh* (on two lines). The seal [...] in the year 244 (?)

19 × 13 × 2 mm

String canal: 9–3 o'clock

1983 9–17 6. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

22



Rectangular seal inscribed in angular script in the centre and around the margins. In the name of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–279/870–92) and Muḥammad, dated 272/885–6.

بسم الله لعبد/الله المعتمد/ على  
الله سنة /اثنتين/وسبعين/ومائتين/محمد

Starting top right: In the name of God. For the servant of God [al-Mu'tamid 'alā Allāh] in the year 272. Muḥammad

Although the reading 'al-Mu'tamid' is unclear, this fits with the date of 272; however, an alternative date of 292/904–5 cannot be ruled out. Letters above the *mīm* of Muḥammad may be *bin*. This Muḥammad is presumably the executive. It is possible that this may be a Dulafid seal (see below). If so, it would correspond in date to the reign of Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (265–80/879–93).

22 × 20 × 3 mm

String canal: 9–3 o'clock

1983 9–17 11. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

23



Lead seal inscribed on one side in angular script in the central field and in the margin. In the names of Abbasid caliph al-Mu'taḍid billāh (279–89/892–902) and Muḥammad b. Ishāq.

Centre

على  
يدي محمد  
بن اسحق

Margin

لعبد الله ابي العباس المعتمد بالله امير المؤمنين

Margin and centre: For al-Mu'taḍid billāh Commander of the Faithful. At the hands of Muḥammad b. Ishāq

The *alif* of Ishāq is omitted. Two further examples of this seal are in Jena (OMJ 311-F7; Stickel 1866: no. 6; Casanova 1894: no. 6) and in Istanbul, formerly in the Drouin collection (Edhem 1904: no. 5). It was suggested by Stickel (1866: 358) that this Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, who can be generally termed an 'executive', could be identified with the governor of Mosul and the Diyār Rab'ā between 278/891 and 282/895. His father Ishāq ibn Kundāj (266–73/879–66) was also a governor of the Jazīra, who figured in struggles against the Tulunids of Egypt (Zambaur 1927: 37). Casanova disagreed with this proposition because he believed that the phrase '*alā yaday*' was only ever used for subordinate officials and not for governors (Casanova 1894: 104–5). However, this theory has now been disproved.

The phrase '*alā yaday*' is found in a number of different contexts. It appears, for example, on Umayyad copper coins. Walker (1956: 227–8 and 263) cites two examples: one struck in Atrīb Miṣr 132/749, with the caliph's name Marwān II on the obverse and the executive named as 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān on the reverse; and a

*fals* struck in 130/747–8 with on the obverse the governor's name Yazīd b. 'Umar, and below him the name of the executive whom Walker describes as 'Prefect of Rayy', Habīb b. Budayl. It also appears on later coins, for example, tenth-century Central Asian coins of Ferghāna (Davidovitch 1972: 118, no. 25). In other contexts, the phrase '*alā yaday*' is found for example in architectural inscriptions, where Blair (1998: 40, 51) suggests that it refers to the supervisor or master of works in charge of the accounts.

The phrase also occurs on glass stamps (Morton 1985: 12–13) – the earliest occurrence is on stamps of the caliph Yazīd II (720–4) with an official named Usāma b. Zayd (Morton 1985: nos. 26–28). Later stamps bear the names of officials, generally the finance director and a subordinate who, Morton argues in a later publication, were the *muḥtasibs* (market superintendents) who worked in the finance department (Morton 1991: 29).

Where the phrase has been noted on lead seals, as in the present case, the executive's name appears with the caliph (Amitai-Preiss 1997: 23).

Two further seals (Casanova 1894: nos. 4–5; Edhem 1904: nos. 3–4) are also in the name of the caliph al-Mu'taḍid. One refers to the *jāliya* of Māh al-Kūfa, the other to the *jāliya* of Hamadān (for the term *jāliya* see below, Cat. 28). The latter (Casanova 1894: no. 5) gives the name of a different executive of the Caliph al-Mu'taḍid, who is named as Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn and who, on the seals, is referred to as '*āmil*' to the caliph. The term usually denotes a government official, in some cases a director of finance or tax collector (Duri, 'Āmil', EI<sup>2</sup>).

21 × 22 × 2 mm

String canal: 10–4 o'clock

1983 9–17 7. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

24



Rectangular lead seal inscribed in angular script in the centre and around the sides. In the name of an Abbasid caliph, probably al-Muktafī (902–8) and Ḥamīd, presumably the executive. Dated 290/902–3.

Margin

لعبد الله الامام [المكتفي بالله امير]  
المؤمنين

Centre

سنة  
تسعين  
ومئتين  
حميد

Margin and centre: For the servant of God al-Imām al-Muktafi, Commander of the Faithful. The year 290. Ḥamīd

17 × 19 × 3 mm

String canal: 12–6 o'clock

1983 9–17 8. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

25



Undetermined circular lead seal inscribed in the centre and around the margin. Dated 304/916–7. This falls into the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Muqtadir (295–320/908–29).

Centre

احمد بن محمد

Margin

بسم الله [...] المقتدر بالله سنة اربع  
وثلاثمائة

Centre and margin: In the name of God Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. [...] al-Muqtadir billāh year 304

22 × 19 × 2 mm

String canal: 12–6 o'clock

1983 9–17 15. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

26



Round lead seal inscribed in angular script in the centre and around the margin in the names of the amir Muḥammad and the executive Manṣūr. A star is below the third line in the field. Dated 285/898.

Margin

[...] الامير محمد على يدي منصور

Centre

ومن (٩) سنة  
خمس وثمانين  
ومئتين (٩)

Margin and centre: Amīr Muḥammad at the hands of Manṣūr [in ?] the year 285

22 mm × 3 mm

String canal: 9–3 o'clock

OR 5288

27



Unevenly shaped lead seal inscribed on one side with five lines of angular script. Dated 375/985–6, in the name of the Buyid ruler Fakhr al-Dawla ('Alī b. Rukn al-Dawla Ḥasan Abū'l Ḥasan (373–87/983–97) and the Abbasid caliph al-Ṭā'ī' (363–81/974–91).

محمد رسول الله  
الطائع لله الامير  
السيد الاجل فخر الدولة  
سنة خمس و سبعين  
وثلاث [مئة]

Lines 1–5: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God. Al-Ṭā'ī', the glorious lord (*al-sayyid*) Fakhr al-Dawlah, year 375

An alternative reading for line 2 proposed by Heidemann is *ṭubī'a bi-amr al-amīr*, 'stamped by order of the amir'. The paleography of the seal can be compared to a Buyid seal in the name of 'Imād al-Dawla (Edhem 1904: no. 19).

30 × 2 mm

String canal: 12–6 o'clock

1983 9–17 14.

### Dulafid sealings

The Dulafids came to prominence in the early ninth century. The founder of the dynasty, the Shī'ī poet and general Abū Dulaf, initially led troops against the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mūn, but was then pardoned by him and employed to quell various rebellions against the caliphate. His family continued to support the Abbasid caliphs, in particular al-Mu'tasim and al-Mu'taḍid. The expression of their support can be seen in the mention of the caliphs on the seals and on their coins (Lane-Poole 1889: 189–90).

The independent dynasty, which was in power for about 70 years, was based in the province of Jibāl, where they had two fiefs known as *al-īghārāyn*. These two *īghārs* were centred on al-Karaj, their capital, and al-Burj, in the vicinity of Isfahan, the exact sites of which are uncertain. They were granted the *īghārs* as fiefs in perpetuity, paying only a fixed yearly tribute to the caliph but free of all other taxes (Marin, 'Dulafids', EI<sup>2</sup>; Le Strange 1930: 197–8).

Although the term *jāliya* found on the seals in administrative contexts is synonymous with the *jizya*, the tax paid by non-Muslims, it may be that *jāliya* in this context means 'tribute' and refers to the fixed tribute payable to the caliphs (see above, Introduction, p. 4).

*Chronology of the Dulafid amirs*  
(Bosworth 1996: 153):

'Abd al-'Azīz b. Abī Dulaf  
(c. 225–60/840–74);

Dulaf b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (260–65/874–9);

Ahmad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (265–80/879–93);

'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (280–3/893–6);

al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (283–4/896–7).



28



Rectangular lead seal of 'Abd al-'Azīz, al-Karaj wa'l Burj, dated 259/872–3. Angular inscriptions on one side in central field and margin.

Margin

بسم الله بركه / تامة (؟) جالية الكرج  
والبرج لسنة / تسع [و] خمسين

Centre

ومائتين

مما امر به / الامير / عبد العزيز / بن دلف

Margin and centre: In the name of God complete (?) blessings on the *jāliya* of al-Karaj and al-Burj for the year 259. Among what has been ordered by the *amīr* 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Dulaf

Other published seals of 'Abd al-'Azīz: 255/868–9: Istanbul (Casanova 1894: no. 11, formerly Drouin collection; Edhem 1904: no. 10) 257/870–1: Jena: (Stickel 1866: no. 1; Casanova 1894: no. 12) 259/872–3: Jena: (Stickel 1866: no. 2; Casanova 1894: no. 13)

16 × 15 × 2 mm  
String canal: 8–3 o'clock  
1983 9–17 9. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

29



Circular lead seal of Dulaf b. 'Abd al-'Azīz with the caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–79/870–92) al-Karaj wa'l Burj, dated 261(?) / 874–5. Angular inscriptions on one side in central field and margins, and there are possible traces of cloth marks on the back.

Margin

بسم الله جالية الكرج والبرج المعتمد على  
الله امير المؤمنين مما

Centre

امر به الامير دلف بن عبد العزيز سنة  
احدى

Crossing in the centre

[و] ستين  
[و] مائتين

Margin, centre, and crossing in the centre: In the name of God. The *jāliya* of al-Karaj and al-Burj, al-Mu'tamid Commander of the Faithful. Among what has been ordered by the *amīr* Dulaf b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, year 261 (?)

The first digit is unclear.

Other published seals of Dulaf: circular seal closely resembling the British Museum example dated 260/873–4 (Casanova 1894: no. 14, Drouin collection, now Istanbul; Edhem 1904: no. 11); square seal dated 262/875–6 (Casanova 1894: no. 15, Drouin collection; Edhem 1904: no. 15).

17 × 2 mm  
String canal: 9–3 o'clock  
1983 9–17 10. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

30



Rectangular seal of Aḥmad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz with caliph al-Mu'tamid (256–79/870–92). Al-Karaj wa'l Burj, 273/886–7.

Margin

بسم الله جالية الكرج والبرج المعتمد على  
الله امير المؤمنين

(Starting top right) In the name of God. The *jāliya* of al-Karaj and al-Burj, al-Mu'tamid Commander of the Faithful

This is the only moderately legible section; the surface is badly deteriorated. Lowick was able to read the name of Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz and the date 273 (886–7).

Other published seals of Aḥmad:

265/878–9 (Stickel 1866: no. 5; Casanova 1894: no. 16)

266/879–80 (Stickel 1866: no. 4; Casanova 1894: no. 17)

17 × 14 × 2 mm  
String canal: 12–6 o'clock  
1983 9–17 12. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

31



Circular seal, damaged. In the name of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz dated 283/8967. Angular inscriptions around the margins and what appears to be a countermark in the centre.

Outer margin

بسم الله [...] بن عمر

Inner margin

بن عبد العزيز بن [ابي دلف سنة ثلث]  
وثمنين ومائتين

Outer and inner margin: In the name of God. [...] bin 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz b. [Abī Dulaf year] 28[3]

The letters in the centre are unclear, but what appear to be *hā'* and *rā'* suggest that this could be al-Ḥārith, 'Umar's successor.

20 × 15 × 1 mm  
String canal: 9–3 o'clock  
1983 9–17 13. Acquired from Jules Richard in 1861

## 2. Names

The seals included in this category are inscribed with personal names in angular or simple cursive scripts. They are arranged according to the order of the Arabic alphabet. This category of seals corresponds to Kalus 1981: sect. I.1.3: 23–31; Kalus 1986: sect. I.1.3: 6–9; Content 1987: 281–91. The structure and types of Arabic names, grammatical features such as the frequent omission of the letter *alif*, and general features of the palaeography are discussed in the Introduction. The images of the seals are reversed.

32



Carnelian, orange-red. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged at the base. Patches of white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. The distinctive triangular *hā'* of Ibrāhīm with its diagonal line appears from the late seventh century (see Grohmann 1971, vol. 2: chart II, and above, Table 1B).

ابراهيم  
بن احمد

Lines 1–2: Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad

The *alif* of Ibrāhīm is omitted.

15 × 12 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 224. Christy collection

33



Carnelian, orange-red. Rectangular, flat top and slightly convex base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with V-shaped ornaments above the line.

ابو بكر بن احمد

Abū Bakr b. Aḥmad

The *rā'* of Bakr appears to have been extended and joins on to the *bin*.

12 × 10 × 5.5 mm  
1878 12–20 268. Christy collection

34



Quartz, most likely carnelian, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with foliate and forked terminals, and a star below the line. The inscription is underlined by the extension of the base of the initial *alif*, which is linked to the final *hā'*.

ابو زين بن ندله

Abū Zayn b. Nadla

12 × 8 × 2 mm  
1943 10–9 9. Godwin-Austen collection

35



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, convex top, flat base with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script with stars above and below the second line.

ابو سعد بن  
ابي القسم

Lines 1–2: Abū Sa'd b. Abū'l-Qasim

The *alif* of Qāsim is omitted.

12 × 9 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14271

36



Agate, brown and white. Dome-shaped with flat top. One line of cursive script. A star above and below the line. A V-shaped ornament above the *sīn*.

ابو القسم

Abū'l-Qasim

The *alif* of Qāsim is omitted. This may be an ancient seal recut. The shape is one commonly used for pre-Islamic Iranian seals (Bivar 1969: 144, no. BG3).

28 × 24 mm  
OA+ 13485

37



Carnelian, orange-brown. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of letters at the top of the seal indicate that the stone has been cut down. The surface is scratched. Two lines of angular script.

ابو نصر بن  
ابو العلا

Lines 1–2: Abū Naṣr b. Abū'l-'Alā

10 × 8 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 206. Christy collection



38



Tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top and base. One line of angular script with wedge-shaped terminals.

أحمد

Aḥmad

10 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 78. Christy collection

39



Tin bronze. Rectangular with convex top and flat base. One line of angular script with wedge-shaped terminals.

أحمد

Aḥmad

12 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 75. Christy collection

40



Carnelian, partially white, probably resulting from weathering or burial. Rectangular, convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with slightly forked terminals. Star above the inscription.

أحمد بن الحسين

Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn

For a stone of similar shape and palaeography, see Kalus 1986: no. I.1.3.7.

11 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 211. Christy collection

41



Garnet, pink-purple. Oval cabochon with hollowed base. One line of angular script; a crescent is above the inscription.

أحمد بن حفص

Aḥmad b. Ḥaḥṣ

12 × 9 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 15. Auckland collection

42



Haematite, black. Hexagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script; the words are joined together forming a continuous line. The letters have forked terminals, while a foliate terminal extends from the *nūn* of *bin*. There are stars above and below the inscription.

أحمد بن الخضر

Aḥmad b. al-Khiḍr

14 × 8 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 115. Duc de Blacas collection

43



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top, set in metal ring. Two lines of angular-cursive script.

أحمد بن سرويه

Lines 1–2: Aḥmad b. Sarawayh (?)

There are a number of possibilities for the father's name. Sārawayh with the *alif* omitted is one possibility, Sārūya

is another (for example, a Sārūya b. Farkhān ruled as one of the Ispahbads of Tabaristān and Gilān (116/734) (Zambaur 1927: 186). Alternatively, an initial letter *shīn* is possible, as in Shīrawayh (Aṣfar b. Shīrawayhī was the first Dailamite general in Iran: Canard, 'Aṣfar b. Shīrawayhī', EI<sup>2</sup>).

13 × 9 × 6 mm  
1880–3659. Masson collection 24

44



Sardonyx, brown and white. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script, the words joined together to form a continuous line. Facing foliate terminals spring from the *nūn* of *bin*.

أحمد بن عبد الله

Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh

11 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 11465

45



Plasma, green. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular-cursive script. A star above and below the inscription.

أحمد بن علي

Aḥmad b. 'Alī

12 × 10 × 4 mm  
1921 2–20 27

46



Jasper, dark green. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. A star is below the inscription.

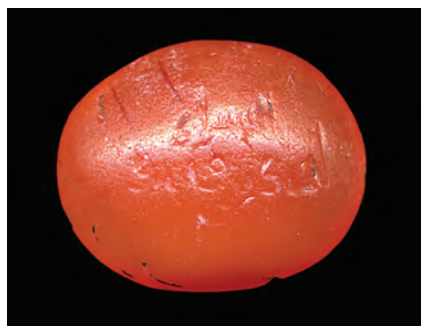
أحمد بن محمد

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad

9 × 5 × 2 mm

1866 12–29 124. Duc de Blacas collection

47



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon. Two lines of angular script; the first line is very worn.

النسائي  
أحمد بن محمد

Lines 1–2: Aḥmad bin Muḥammad al-Nisā'ī

The *nisba* is uncertain, but the first of the four teeth looks slightly higher than the following three, which makes *nūn* followed by *sīn* likely.

13 × 10 × 5.5 mm

1878 12–20 143. Christy collection

48



Jasper, dark blue-green. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

اسماعيل  
بن الخليل

Lines 1–2: Isma'īl b. al-Khalīl

*Khalīl Allāh* is an epithet of the Prophet Abraham. It is possible that some protective function to the seal may be intended here. Al-Ḥalīl is also attested in Ṭabarī (1939, vol. 2: 255), as is al-Jalīl (Ṭabarī 1939, vol. 8: 627). Al-Ḥājir may be another possibility.

12 × 8 × 2 mm

OA+ 14357

49



Carnelian, dark orange. Oval, flat top and hollowed base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script, six-pointed stars above and below the inscription.

أم نصر بنت تميم

Umm Naṣr bint Tamīm

Tamīm is the most likely possibility here for the second name and is well attested as a personal name. An early example is the poet and one of the Companions of the Prophet, Tamīm al-Dārī (Nicholson 1930: 225).

15 × 10 × 4 mm

1893 4–26 161. Franks collection

50



Carnelian, dark orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with diacritics; a slight fork in the terminal of the letter *bā'*. Stars above and below Bahman.

بهمن

Bahman

13 × 11 × 5 mm

1878 12–20 261. Christy collection

51



Garnet, purple-red. Oval cabochon with hollowed base. One line of angular script. Damaged.

بنان بن اسحق

Bannān b. Ishāq

The first name (*ism*) could alternatively be Bunān or Bunnān, names attested in Dhahabī (1962: 90–1). Dhahabī also notes an Ishāq b. Bannān al-Jawharī al-Dimashqī, a jeweller from Damascus. (Tubān or Tubbān are also possibilities). The *alif* of Ishāq is omitted.

11 × 9 × 4 mm

OA+ 14306

52



Jasper, black. Rectangular, flat top, uneven base with straight sides. One line of angular script, the words are joined to form a continuous line.

جعفر بن سلم

Ja'far b. Salm

Sālim with the *alif* omitted is another possibility.

9 × 6 × 2.5 mm

1866 12–29 119. Duc de Blacas collection

53



Carnelian, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of



angular script; the words are joined to form a continuous line. A foliate terminal springs up vertically from the *nūn* of *bin*. Stars above and below the inscription.

جعفر بن محمد

Ja'far b. Muḥammad

12 × 8 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 218. Christy collection

54



Carnelian, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with wedge-shaped terminals; a foliate terminal extends from the *nūn* of *bin*. There is a crescent above the first line.

جعفر بن محمد

Ja'far b. Muḥammad

12 × 10 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 217. Christy collection

55



Chalcedony, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval, flat top, slightly hollowed base and bevelled sides. One line of angular script.

جبريل بن يزيد

Jibrīl b. Yazīd

15 × 11 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 215. Christy collection

56



Garnet, dark red. Oval cabochon with bevelled sides and hollowed base. One line of angular script underlined by the return of the *yā'* of 'Alī.

الحسن بن علي

al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī

14 × 10 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14289

57



Carnelian, red-brown. Rectangular with rounded ends and a flat top set in a metal ring. One line of angular script with wedge-shaped terminals. The *mīm* of Muḥammad floats above the line.

الحسن بن محمد

al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad

15 × 11 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 12. Christy collection

58



Garnet, purple-red. Oval, flat top and concave base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script, the words continuously joined. Part of the inscription is above the line.

حسن بن [...] حسينيويه

Ḥasan b. Ḥusaynūya

Under the *waw* are traces of another letter, possibly a *dāl*.

14 × 9 × 2.5 mm  
1841 7–26 295

59



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script. A star is below the inscription.

الحسن  
بن يزيد

Lines 1–2: al-Ḥasan b. Yazīd

11 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
1866 12–29 123. Duc de Blacas collection

60



Rock crystal, chipped on the back. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

الحسين بن  
محمد

Lines 1–2: al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad

9 × 7 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 128. Christy collection

61



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and slightly hollowed base with straight sides. One line of angular script.

حمدان بن عبد الله

Ḥamdān b. 'Abdallāh

Ḥamdān is the most likely reading, but Jumdān is also possible.

14 × 9 × 3 mm  
1880–3666. Masson collection 31

62



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon. One line of angular script.

حنان ساعون

Ḥannān Sā'ūn

The reading is tentative. There are other possibilities for the first name: Jabbār, for example.

7 × 11 × 6 mm  
1880–3667. Masson collection 32

63



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script, star above the inscription.

حيدر بن  
ابو الفتح

Lines 1–2: Ḥaydar b. Abū'l-Faṭḥ

11 × 10.5 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 181. Christy collection

64



Jasper, black. Flat top and slightly hollowed base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with a star below the line. The *khā'* of *Khiḍr* cuts diagonally through the line and the *mīm* of *Mukhallad* sits on a short stem.

الخضر بن مخلد

al-Khiḍr b. Mukhallad

11 × 10 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14345

65



Garnet, oval cabochon with hollowed base. Pierced. One line of angular script.

الرواد بن حله

al-Riwād (?) b. Ḥ-l-h (?)

Ruwād is attested (Ruwād al-Ka'bī; Ṭabarī 1939, vol. 5: 561). Alternatively al-Riqād, attested in Ṭabarī (al-Riqād b. Ziyād; Ṭabarī 1939, vol. 6: 301 and elsewhere). The second name is unclear.

11 × 10 × 5 mm  
OA+ 7453

66



Plasma, blue-green. Round, flattish top and base. Two lines of angular-cursive script.

رضى  
الدين

Lines 1–2: Riḍā al-Dīn

10 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 123

67



Carnelian, orange. Flattish top and base and bevelled sides. One line of cursive script.

روشنائي / روستائي

Rūstā'ī/Rawshanā'ī (?)

The name is unclear. Rawshanā'ī means 'luminosity' in Persian.

14 × 11 × 4.5 mm  
1880–3643. Masson collection, no. 8

68



Goethite and haematite, brown and steel-grey. Rectangular, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

سعد

Sa'd

13 × 9 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 118. Duc de Blacas collection

69



Garnet, dark-red. Rectangular, flattish top, flat base and straight sides. Two lines of angular script. Three horizontal parallel lines within the inscription are formed by the return of the letters 'ayn, lām, and yā' of 'Alī.

سعيد بن علي

Sa'īd b. 'Alī

'Alī is split into two on either side of Sa'īd, and *bin* in tiny script is above the line.

8 × 4 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 132. Christy collection

70



Jasper, black. Round, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

ساكان  
بن حميد

Lines 1–2: Sākān b. Ḥamīd

10 × 8 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 111. Christy collection



71



Quartz, black and white onyx. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. A crescent is above and a star is below the inscription.

سلمان بن شجاع

Salmān b. Shujāʿ

13 × 8 × 5 mm  
1853 3–28 13. Auckland collection

72



Leaded tin bronze. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular cursive script.

سهل

بن حسين

Lines 1–2: Sahl b. Ḥusayn

The figure of eight *hāʾ* of Sahl is found on papyrus inscriptions, for example in the letters of the governor and finance director of Egypt, Qurra b. Sharīk (709–14) (Gruendler 1993: 107 and 15–16).

9 × 6.5 × 1.5 mm  
1878 12–20 94. Christy collection

73



Garnet, purple-pink. Oval cabochon, with slightly hollowed base. One line of angular script with forked terminals. The *nūn* of *bin* extends out into a foliate terminal.

سهل بن ساكان

Sahl b. Sākān

11 × 7 × 4.7 mm  
1880–3641 Masson collection 6a

74



Jasper, black. Round, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script. Shādhī is underlined by the return of the *yāʾ*. Stars above and below the inscription.

شاذي

بن طيب

Lines 1–2: Shādhī b. Ṭayyib

11 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
1893 4–26 162. Franks collection

75



Carnelian, orange with white patches, probably resulting from weathering or burial. Rectangular, convex top, flat base with bevelled sides, damaged at bottom right at the beginning of the second line. Two lines of cursive script.

طاهر بن عبيد الله

بن مغيرة

Lines 1–2: Ṭāhir b. ʿUbaydallāh b. Mughīra

10 × 9 × 3.1 mm  
1878 12–20 212. Christy collection

76



Carnelian, bright orange. Hexagonal with flat top and base with sides angled sharply inwards towards the base. One line of angular-cursive script with forked terminals.

طاحون / طلحون

Ṭāhūn or Ṭalḥūn.

13 × 8 × 5 mm  
OA+ 14297

77



Jasper, yellow-brown. Rectangular with flat top and bevelled sides angled sharply inwards towards the base. Two lines of cursive script.

عابد بن احمد

بن الحسن

Lines 1–2: ʿĀbid b. Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan

15 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 124. Christy collection.

78



Carnelian, dark orange. Convex top, straight cut sides and flat base. Two lines of cursive script. Star above the inscription.

العباس بن محمد

Lines 1–2: al-ʿAbbās b. Muḥammad

9 × 7.5 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 188. Christy collection

79



Lapis lazuli, blue. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with diacritical marks. A *fatha* is above the *ʾayn*, a V-shaped ornament below Allāh, and possibly a *kasra* next to it.



عبد الله

'Abdallāh

12 × 10 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 21. Auckland collection

80



Sardonyx, brown and white. Truncated cone with flat top and base. One line of angular script.

عبد الله بن احمد

'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad

10 × 7 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14337

81



Garnet, purple. Straight-sided oval with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. Arrowhead designs on either side of inscription.

عبد الله  
بن بحر القصري

Lines 1–2: 'Abdallāh b. B-ḥr al-Qaṣrī

Buḥur and Baḥar are attested in Dhahabī (1962: 52). Badr is another possibility. For the *nisba*, al-Qaṣrī appears the most likely. An example of this name is Khālīd b. 'Abdallāh al-Qaṣrī, who was Abbasid governor of Kufa in the mid-eighth century (Hawting, 'Khalid b. 'Abd Allāh al-Qaṣrī', EI<sup>2</sup>).

8 × 11 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 131. Christy collection

82



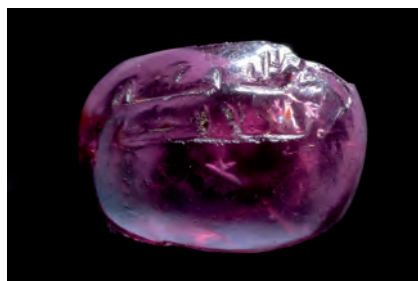
Garnet, purple-red. Oval, flat top with hollowed base and steep bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. A star is above the inscription.

عبد الله بن الحسين  
بن راشد

Lines 1–2: 'Abdallāh b. al-Ḥusayn b. Rāshid

12 × 9 × 2.5 mm  
1853 3–28 14. Auckland collection

83



Garnet, purple. Oval cabochon with hollowed base damaged at the top. Two lines of angular script. A star is below the inscription.

عبد الله  
بن سعيد

Lines 1–2: 'Abdallāh b. Sa'īd

8 × 5 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 134. Christy collection

84



Carnelian, now white, probably through weathering or burial. Oval, flat top and base with rounded ends and bevelled sides. One line of cursive script. The *nūn* of *bin* has become schematised into a loop. A crescent is above the inscription.

عبد الله بن عبيد الله

'Abdallāh b. 'Ubaydallāh

13 × 9 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 216. Christy collection

85



Garnet, dark red. Oval cabochon with flat base. One line of angular script.

عبد الله بن هلال

'Abdallāh b. Hilāl

13 × 7 × 4 mm  
1893 4–26 160. Franks collection

86



Bronze with long mount, a hole at the end for suspension and a loop of coiled wire. Two lines of angular script.

عبد المؤمن  
بن حكم

Lines 1–2: 'Abd al-Mu'min b. Ḥakam

Length: 30 mm (excluding loop);  
Width of seal area: 10 mm  
2001 8–6 3

87



Leaded gunmetal. Oval cabochon with flat base. One line of angular script.

عزيز بن احمد

'Azīz b. Aḥmad

8 × 6 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 120. Christy collection

88



Haematite, dark grey. Rectangular flat top and base with bevelled sides. One side cut down. Two lines of angular script, the final *nūn* and *zāy* looping up and with forked terminals.

عزیز  
بن قبیح / فتیح

Lines 1–2: ‘Azīz b. Qabīḥ

There are a number of possibilities for the father’s name. These include Qabīḥ, ‘the ugly one’. Schimmel (1989: 13) notes the use of a woman’s name, Qabīḥa, who was a beautiful slave girl belonging to the caliph al-Mutawakkil and so-called to avert the evil eye. An alternative is Futayḥ, a diminutive form of Fath.

12 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 102. Christy collection

89



Tinned copper, round top with bevelled sides and flat base. Angular-cursive script. The letter *yā* has an elaborate tail. Two strokes on either side of ‘Alī.

علي

‘Alī

13 × 10 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 84. Christy collection

90



Carnelian, orange-brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with slightly forked terminals. A diacritical mark under the letter *bā* of *bin*.

علي بن احمد

‘Alī b. Aḥmad

13 × 10.5 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 262. Christy collection

91



Leaded tin bronze, set in a ring. Crudely written cursive script on two lines with dots and dashes.

علا بن  
ايوب

Lines 1–2: Alā’ b. Ayyūb

An alternative reading for the first line is ‘Alī (written with *lām-alif* rather than the usual *yā*).

13 × 10 × 5 mm  
1861 12–21 9

92



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top, bevelled base and sides. Two lines of cursive script with forked terminals.

علي بن ابراهيم  
بن الحسين

Lines 1–2: ‘Alī b. Ibrahīm b. al-Ḥusayn

12 × 11 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 266. Christy collection

93



Onyx, dark brown, black and white. Oval with flat top set in a metal ring. One line of angular script; the *lām* of ‘Alī has a forked terminal. Star below the line.

علي بن جعفر

‘Alī b. Ja‘far

15 × 11 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 19. Christy collection

94



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top rounded at the back. Two lines of script, the terminals of the letters are slightly forked. A star is above the inscription. Damaged top right.

علي بن الحسن  
الحسن بن الحسين

Line 1: ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan

Line 2: al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn

Masson in his notes suggested for the second line *al-Ḥusaynī al-Ḥasanī*. In this case the owner would be indicating that he is from the family of the Shī‘ī martyrs Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.

10 × 9 × 3.5 mm  
1880–3663. Masson collection 28. Masson notes ‘from India Museum’



95



Leaded low-tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script. Traces of a letter (*nūn*?) or crescent-shaped symbol above the *bin*.

علي بن حمد

‘Alī b. Ḥamd

8 × 7 × 2.2 mm  
1878 12–20 295. Christy collection

98



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides cut down, making the last letter unclear. One line of angular-cursive script.

علي بن هاني

‘Alī b. Hānī

9 × 6 × 2.8 mm  
1878 12–20 170. Christy collection

101



Goethite, dark-grey. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. One line of angular script.

عثمن بن

‘Uthman b[in]

The *alif* of ‘Uthmān is omitted.

8 × 8 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 105. Christy collection

96



Haematite, black. Rectangular with flat top and base and bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals. The words are joined in a continuous line. The initial *mīm* floats above the line. Stars above and below the inscription. Damaged bottom right.

علي بن محمد

‘Alī b. Muḥammad

15 × 10 × 4.5 mm  
1880–3652 Masson collection 17. Masson notes ‘from India Museum’

99



Metal. Oval cabochon with flat base; damaged surface. Two lines of angular script with foliate terminals.

علي بن احمد  
مولى امير المؤمنين

Lines 1–2: ‘Alī b. Aḥmad (?) client of the Commander of the Faithful [i.e. the caliph]

For the term *mawlā*, see *Cat.* 20.

10 × 7 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 93. Christy collection

102



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top with hollowed base and straight sides. Two lines of cursive script. A star is above the inscription. Damaged at the base.

عثمن بن محمد

Lines 1–2: ‘Uthman b. Muḥammad

The *alif* of ‘Uthmān is omitted.

13 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 166. Christy collection

97



Goethite, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with forked terminals.

علي بن محمد

‘Alī b. Muḥammad

12 × 9 × 2 mm  
1943 10–9 12. Godwin-Austen collection

100



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with flat base. The surface is worn and the angular inscription is very faint.

عباس بن علي

‘Abbās b. ‘Alī

11 × 10 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 147. Christy collection

103



Carnelian, upper surface white, probably through weathering or burial. Oval, flat top and hollowed base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script

عمر بن حماد

‘Umar b. Ḥammād

An alternative for the second name is *Jimād* (Dhahabī 1962: 169).

14 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 11462



104



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script. Damaged.

عمر بن علي

‘Umar b. ‘Alī

15 × 11.5 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 265. Christy collection

105



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script; ‘Īsā is underlined by the return of the letter *yā*. Star below the inscription.

عيسى بن سليمان

‘Īsā b. Sulayman

The *alif* of Sulaymān is omitted.

12 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14348

106



Carnelian, orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

فائد

Fā’id

16 × 10 × 3 mm  
1880–3649. Masson collection 14

107



Carnelian, dark orange. Flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script.

فرج بن علي

Lines 1–2: Faraj b. ‘Alī

13 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 267. Christy collection

108



Chalcedony, now white, probably damaged by heat. Rectangular, flat top with slightly hollowed base and bevelled sides. Damaged bottom left. One line of angular script with elegant foliation of the letter *rā*.

فريد

Farīd  
Alternatively Fā’id.

14 × 11 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 209. Christy collection

109



Goethite, brown. Square with convex top set in metal ring. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

الفضل بن سعيد

al-Faḍl b. Sa’īd

11 × 10 × 6 mm  
1878 12–20 17. Christy collection

110



Jasper, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged bottom left. Two lines of angular script.

الفضل بن محمد

Lines 1–2: al-Faḍl b. Muḥammad

9 × 7 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14276

111



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular with convex top, flat base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script.

القاسم بن محمد

al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad

11 × 7 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14269

112



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals; al-Ḥasanī is underlined by the return of the letter *yā*.

كمرن الحسني

Kamran (?) al-Ḥasanī

13 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14291

113



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. There are traces of other letters on the back.

مويد (مؤيد)

Mu[']jayyad

The *hamza* is not shown, as is usual with early inscriptions (see 'Grammatical and orthographic features' in the Introduction).

12 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 196. Christy collection

114



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with wedges on either side of the upper parts of the letters *lām* and *alif*. Cross-like ornaments above and below the inscription.

متي بن حاتم بن بسيل

Matay b. Hātim b. Basīl

That this is a Christian owner – Matay being the Arabic form of 'Matthew' – is reinforced by the symbols of crosses.

17 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14372

115



Leaded tin bronze. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. The inscription can be read in two directions with the star either at the top or the bottom.

محمد

Muḥammad

11 × 13 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 85. Christy collection

116



Tin bronze. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides.

One line of angular script. Like Cat. 115, it can be read in two directions.

محمد

Muḥammad

5 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 91. Christy collection

117



Leaded tin bronze. Hexagonal, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. The word Muḥammad can be read in four different directions.

محمد

Muḥammad

11 × 7 × 0.5 mm  
1878 12–20 82. Christy collection

118



Garnet, purple-red. Square, flat top with bevelled sides and hollowed base. One line of angular script.

محمد

Muḥammad

7 × 5.5 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 133. Duc de Blacas collection

119



Carnelian, bright orange. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. One line of angular script with forked terminals, incised lines forming a frame on three sides.

محمد

Muḥammad

7 × 7 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 173. Christy collection

120



Jasper, black. Rectangular, flat top, with uneven base and bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals. The words are joined to form a continuous line. Star below the inscription.

محمد بن احمد

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad

8 × 4.5 × 3 mm  
1880–3665 Masson collection 30

121



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base, with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script, diacritical mark under the *bā'* of *bin*.

محمد بن احمد بن محمود

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd

17 × 8 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 202. Christy collection



122



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and high bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

محمد بن ابراهيم

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm

The *alif* of Ibrāhīm is omitted.

15 × 10 × 4 mm  
OA+ 11463

123



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top, convex base and bevelled sides. The stone has been cut down after carving. Two lines of angular-cursive script with forked terminals. The *jīm* of Ja'far is written upright rather than sloping to the left, and the third side of the triangular 'ayn is omitted. The *rā'* loops up vertically. The base of the *ḥā'* of Ishaq extends back to the right and underlines the *sīn*.

محمد بن جعفر  
بن اسحق

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Ja'far b. Ishaq  
The *alif* of Ishaq is omitted.

'Ishaq' written in this way is found on a seal in the Iraq museum (Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: 30, no. 20).

11 × 10 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 177. Christy collection

124



Leaded tin bronze. Hexagonal, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script.

محمد بن شاذي

Muḥammad b. Shādhī

14 × 8 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 81. Christy collection

125



Carnelian, orange, white in places, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script with forked terminals. The second *bin* and Yaḥyā are placed above and below the middle line.

بن  
محمد بن عبد الله  
يحيى

Lines 1–3: Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Yaḥyā

17 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 288. Christy collection

126



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script.

محمد بن علي

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. 'Alī

13 × 11 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 263. Christy collection

127



Haematite, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a metal ring with foliate edge. One line of angular script with forked terminals. A foliate terminal extends from the *nūn* of *bin*.

محمد بن عمر

Muḥammad b. 'Umar

Dimensions (max.): 13 × 8 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 13. Christy collection

128



Carnelian. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The composition is unusual: the letters of the first Muḥammad are extended, with the rest of the inscription doubling back on itself.

محمد بن محمد

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad

12 × 10 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14253

129



Carnelian, dark orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script. Dots on the *nūn* and *bā'* of *bin*.

محمد بن محمد

Muḥammad b. Muḥammad

17.5 × 11 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14295



130



Onyx, black and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

محمد بن مقلّاس

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Miqlās

14 × 9 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14363

131



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides set in metal ring. One line of angular script with forked terminals. A foliate terminal extends from the *nūn* of *bin*. Triangular *hā'* with central diagonal line of Hāshim. A star is below the inscription.

محمد بن هاشم

Muḥammad b. Hāshim

15 × 12 × 3.5 mm  
Ring: 15 × 12 mm  
OA+ 13514

132



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script.

محمد بن الهيثم

Muḥammad b. al-Haytham

13 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14371

133



Brass. Oval, flat with straight sides, surface damaged. Two lines of angular script. The letters of Muḥammad are written without ligatures.

محمد بن  
المط [...]

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. al-M-ṭ [?]

11 × 8 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14343

134



Carnelian, patchy white through weathering or burial. Angular inscription on two lines.

محمد بن يونس  
بن الحسن

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Yūnus b. al-Ḥasan

12 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14250

135



Chalcedony, pale blue. Cabochon with flat base. One line of cursive script with ornament or letter above the letter *wāw*.

محمود

Maḥmūd

16 × 13 × 9 mm  
1878 12–20 69. Christy collection

136



Aragonite, cream shell. Flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of script.

مرصب بن  
قدر

Lines 1–2: M-r-s-b b. Qadr (?)  
This reading is tentative.

13 × 11 × 4.2 mm  
1878 12–20 228. Christy collection

137



Garnet, purple-red. Cabochon, oval with hollowed base, broken. Part of one line of angular script visible. Elaborate *alif maqṣūra* of Mūsā.

موسى بن

Mūsā b.

10 × 5 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 138. Christy collection

138



Lead tin bronze. Rectangular, set in a ring. One line of angular script. The letter *alif* inscribed as a double line with an arrowhead-shaped terminal. Possible traces of a word to the right.

مسلم

Muslim

11 × 8 × 3.5 mm  
1861 12–21 15

139



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script. A star is above the inscription.

مسلم بن منصور

Muslim b. Maṣṣūr

Alternatively, Musallam for the first name.

10 × 9 × 3 mm

1893 4–26 165. Franks collection

140



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script.

المطهر

al-Muṭaḥhar

13 × 9 × 3.5 mm

1893 4–26 168. Franks collection. Acquisition register entry 'from India'

141



Onyx, black and white. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

معانة بنت يوسف

Lines 1–2: M-‘āna bint Yūsuf

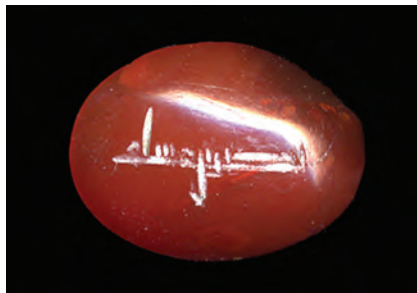
M-‘āna is the most likely interpretation (the vocalisation is unclear).

A M-‘āna bint Jawsham is in Ṭabarī 1939, vol. 1: 560. This is one of a very few seals in this collection inscribed with a woman's name.

12 × 9 × 2.5 mm

OA+ 14277

142



Carnelian, dark orange. Oval cabochon. One line of angular script.

نصر بن مسلم

Naṣr b. Muslim

13 × 9 × 6 mm

1943 10–9 5. Godwin-Austen collection

143



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script underlined by the return of the letter yā'. A crescent is above the line and a star is below.

هرون بن موسى

Harūn b. Mūsā

The *alif* of Harūn is omitted.

11 × 9 × 2.5 mm

OA+ 14347

144



Carnelian, now white, probably resulting from weathering or burial. Rectangular, convex top and flat base and bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بن  
ابي شجاع فارس  
يوسف

Lines 1–3: Yūsuf b. Abī Shujā' Fāris

This is a common style of splitting up a name on early seals, with the *bin* above and the Yūsuf below the central line. It may be that Fārisī is intended here, a *nisba* indicating that the owner originally came from Fāris in western Iran, although al-Fārisī would be more common. In Persian it is possible to use the *Izafeh* instead of *al* (see Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 72 for a craftsman called Nāser b. As'ad-e Neyshābūrī).

16 × 14 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 210. Christy collection

145



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with slightly forked terminals.

يوسف بن ابراهيم

Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm

The *alif* of Ibrāhīm is omitted.

16.5 × 13.5 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 264. Christy collection

146



Haematite, black. Rectangular flat with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals. Cut down.

بن يوسف

Bin Yūsuf

10 × 5 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 98. Christy collection

147



Tin bronze. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides; bezel broken from a ring. Two lines of angular script. Surface damaged.

Lines 1–2: Ya‘qūb

8 × 5 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 96. Christy collection

يعقوب  
ب

148



Carnelian, bright orange. Octagonal, flat top, slightly hollowed base with bevelled sides. Cut down to the right. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. Six-pointed stars above and below the first line.

[...] كاتر (?)  
[...] ولي وسب (?)

Line 1: [...] kātir

Line 2: [...] walī wasab

9 × 9 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 153. Christy collection



### 3. Names and phrases

The seals included here are inscribed with personal names with the addition of a short phrase. They are arranged in groups according to phrase. This category corresponds to Kalus 1981: sect. I.1.2, 17–23; Kalus 1986: sect. I.1.2, 5–9; Content 1987: 276–280. Many of these name/phrase combinations appear on the rock inscriptions of the Syrian Hajj route (al-Kilabi 2009), dating to the eighth–tenth centuries.

#### *al-i‘ṭṣām billāh* (‘seeking refuge in God’)

149



Carnelian, orange-brown. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script; the words are joined to form continuous lines.

سعيد بن حكم  
بالله يعتصم

Lines 1–2: Sa‘īd b. Ḥakam seeks refuge in God

For the use of this phrase on seals see Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 141. For another example with this phrase alone see **Cat. 284**.

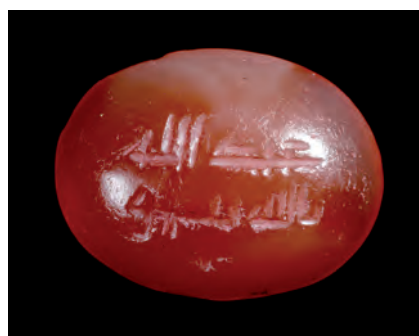
16 × 12 × 2.5 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 13

#### *al-thiqa billāh* (‘trust in God’)

The phrase ‘trust in God’ (with a number of variations) bears some similarity to a formula found on Sasanian seals (*‘pst’n ’L yzdy*, ‘trust or confidence in God’, also used with the addition of a name; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 125–6). The phrase occurs on caliphal seals such as that of the Abbasid caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, as noted by al-Mas‘ūdī and others. (Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 144, no. 56; 151, no. 2). It is found on the rock crystal seal of the Fatimid chief *kātib* Fahd b. Ibrāhīm (*Trésors Fatimides* 1998: 140, no. 84). It appears on clay sealings from Arabic papyrus

documents from the ninth century (Ragib 1982: 298) on glass stamps (Morton 1985: 133, no. 384) and in early Arabic rock inscriptions of about the eighth to tenth centuries (Muaikel 1994: 168; Hoyland 1997a: 7; al-Kilabi 2009: nos. 186, 188, 216, 242 etc.). The inscription is often arranged with *billāh* above and *yathiq* below with the name in the centre.

150



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval cabochon, flat base. Two lines of angular script. A star is below the inscription.

عبد الله  
بالله يثق

Lines 1–2: In God ‘Abdallāh trusts

11 × 9 × 4 mm  
OA + 14293

151



Haematite, black. Rectangular flat top and uneven base with bevelled sides (corner chipped). Two lines of angular script. A crescent is above the first line.

بالله عبد الله  
يثق

Lines 1–2: In God ‘Abdallāh trusts

14 × 11 × 4 mm  
1880–3653. Masson collection, no. 18

152



Carnelian. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular-cursive script. The last line is partially blundered.

بالله يثق  
عبد الله بن محمد  
بن ماجونه

Lines 1–3: In God trusts ‘Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. Mājūna, or Maḥwiya (?)

14 × 14 × 1 mm  
1841 7–26 296

153



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat, set in bronze mount (possibly a child’s ring). Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بالله يثق  
احمد

Lines 1–2: In God Aḥmad trusts

9 × 7 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 13484

154



Carnelian, red-orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular-cursive script with dots on the *qāf* of *yathiq*. A star is at the end of the second line.

يثق بالله  
اسد

Lines 1–2: In God Asad trusts

The script combines cursive elements such as the *qāf* with the more angular style as visible in the *dāl* of Asad. The addition of dots on letters, as evident here on the *qāf*, is a relatively rare feature on early seals. The third tooth of the *sīn* has been amalgamated with the *dāl*.

14 × 12 × 3 mm  
OA + 14316

155



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, chipped top left. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بالله يثق  
زكريا

Lines 1–2: In God Zakarīyā (?) trusts

The reading is uncertain as the last *alif* is not very clear. For the name Zakarīyā, see Introduction, p. 16.

12 × 10 × 0.5 mm  
1866 12–29 120. Duc de Blacas collection

156



Carnelian, pink-orange, slightly white in patches as a result of weathering or burial. Octagonal, slightly convex top with bevelled sides cut down. Three lines of cursive script. Star and crescent top right, and a star on its own below.

بالله  
علي بن احمد [د]  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God ‘Alī b. Aḥm[ad] trusts

11 × 9.5 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 213. Christy collection

157



Haematite, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بالله  
احمد  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Aḥmad trusts

15 × 12 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 116. Duc de Blacas collection

158



Jasper, red. Oval with convex top, flat base and bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script.

بالله  
احمد بن محمد  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Aḥmad b. Muḥammad trusts

19 × 13 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14322

159



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat with bevelled sides set in a gold ring. Two lines of angular script with foliate terminals in an exceptionally elegant composition, which spring and cross over from the terminals of the *mīm* of Ibrahīm and the *nūn* of bin. The *wāw* of Ya‘qūb loops upwards and has a similar terminal.

بالله  
ابراهيم بن يعقوب  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Ibrahīm b. Ya‘qūb trusts

12 × 8 × 5 mm  
1866 12–29 105. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 264, no. 110)

160



Jasper, black. Oval, flat with bevelled sides set in metal ring. Three lines of angular script.

بالله  
ابراهيم بن اسمعيل  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Ibrahīm b. Isma‘īl trusts

The *alifs* of Ibrahīm and Isma‘īl are omitted.

14 × 10 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 16. Christy collection

161



Carnelian, orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, damaged in places. Three lines of cursive script with forked terminals.

بالله  
قاسم بن علي  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Qāsim b. ‘Alī trusts

The *mīm* of Qāsim is merged into the curve of the *bin*. *Yathiq* on the last line is clearly intended but is miswritten.

18 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 203. Christy collection

162



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. Strokes below show that *yathiq* is likely to have been intended.

بالله  
الحسين بن محمد  
[يثق]

Lines 1–3: In God al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad [trusts]

10 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 186. Christy collection

163



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Chipped at the corner. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals on the hastae of Allāh.

بالله  
محمد  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Muḥammad trusts

The *yathiq* on the last line is very stylised.

18 × 15 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 179. Christy collection

164



Carnelian, red-orange and pale orange banding. Oval, flat base with slightly convex top and bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بالله  
محمد بن عبد الله [sic]  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh trusts

There is an extra *alif* after ‘Abd.

16.5 × 12 × 3.5 mm  
OA + 14311

165



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides and hollowed base. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals

بالله  
محمد بن عبد الله  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh trusts

17 × 13 × 3 mm  
1880–3650. Masson collection, no. 15

166



Chalcedony, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval cabochon, carved on the flat side. Three lines of angular script with very slightly forked terminals. The *bin* is squeezed in between the two names.

بالله  
محمد بن موسى  
يثق

Lines 1–3: In God Muḥammad b. Mūsā trusts

11 × 5 × 4.6 mm  
1878 12–20 227. Christy collection

167



Haematite, dark-grey. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cut down on the right. Three lines of angular script with wedge-shaped terminals.

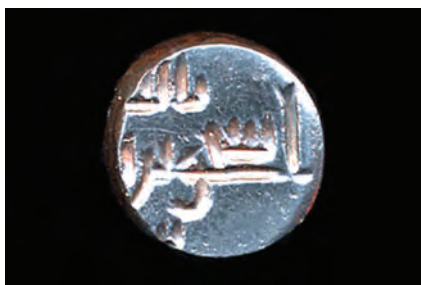
[بالله]  
[...بن موسى]  
[يثق]

Lines 1–3: In God [...] b. Mūsā trusts

12 × 9 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 101. Christy collection



168



Haematite, black. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بالله  
اسحق بن ا[...]  
يثق[ق]

Lines 1–3: In God Iṣḥāq b. A[?] trusts

The *alif* of Iṣḥāq is omitted.

8 × 2.5 mm

1878 12–20 109. Christy collection

169



Quartz, red-orange carnelian. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script.

بالله  
هلوان بن الحسن  
يثق

Lines 1–3: Hilwān (?) b. al-Ḥasan trusts in God

Hilwāth is another possibility. The name is attested in Ṭabarī (al-Hilwāth al-Kalbī, see Ṭabarī 1967, vol. 6: 499).

13 × 9 × 1 mm

OA+ 14252

170



Chalcedony ring, pierced and broken, with rectangular flat top and slightly bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script. Star above the *bin* and V-shaped marks above the *ṣad* of *ṣamad* and *sīn* of Sa'd.

يثق بالصمد  
سعد بن محمد

Lines 1–2: Sa'd b. Muḥammad believes in the everlasting (an epithet of God)

Bezel: 12 × 10 × 3 mm

Ring: 27 × 25 × 10 mm

OA+7451

171



Silver seal with long mount which has a hole at the end for suspension. Two lines of angular script.

جابر بن محمد  
بالله يثق

Lines 1–2: Jābir b. Muḥammad trusts in God

Length: 29 mm; width of seal area: 8 mm

2001 8–6 1

172



Bronze seal with long mount with a hole at the end for suspension. Two lines of angular script.

جميل بن عبد  
الرحمن بالله يثق

Lines 1–2: Jumayl b. 'Abd al-Raḥman trusts in God

24 × 8 mm (with mount)

2001 8–6 2

173



Carnelian, dark orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script. A cross is above the *sīn* of Iṣḥāq.

ثقه  
منصور بن اسحق  
خالقه

Lines 1–3: The trust of Maṣṣūr b. Iṣḥāq is in his creator

The *alif* of Iṣḥāq is omitted.

17 × 11 × 2.5 mm

OA+ 14376

174



Garnet, purple-red. Oval cabochon. One line of angular script.

الله ثقه اسعد

Allāh is the trust of As'ad

11 × 9 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 137. Christy collection

175



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat with straight sides. Three lines of angular script.

الله ثقه  
صالح بن  
مسافر

Lines 1–3: God is the trust of Ṣāliḥ b. Musāfir

10 × 7 × 3 mm

1853 3–28 7. Auckland collection

176



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script. A star is above the inscription.

الله ثقه  
جبريل

Lines 1–2: Allāh is the trust of Jibrīl

10 × 8 × 3.2 mm  
1866 12–29 106. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 265, no. 1)

177



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a bronze ring. One line of angular script.

الله ثقه سليم

God is the trust of Salīm (or Sulaym)

17 × 12 × 8 mm  
1878 12–20 11. Christy collection

178



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script. A star is below the line.

الله ثقه هلال

God is the trust of Hilāl

The *alif* of Hilāl is omitted.

9 × 8 × 2 mm  
1866 12–29 122. Duc de Blacas collection

179



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, cabochon (barrel) with flat base. Two lines of angular script.

الله ثقه  
عبد الرحمن

Lines 1–2: God is the trust of ‘Abd al-Raḥman

The *alif* of Raḥmān is omitted. The letter *rā* resembles more the letter *hā*.

11 × 8 × 4.5 mm  
1853 3–28 11. Auckland collection

180



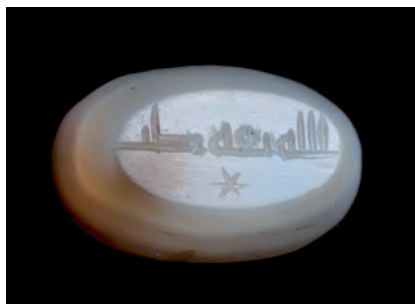
Jasper, black. Oval, flat top set in bronze ring. Two lines of angular script.

الله ثقه  
فرج

Lines 1–2: God is the trust of Faraj

11 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 13507

181



Agate, white and light brown. Oval truncated cone. One line of script. Star below the line.

الله ثقه صلت

God is the trust of Ṣalt

13 × 9 × 8 mm  
OA+ 14362

182



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

الله ثقه  
حرب بن مله

Lines 1–2: God is the trust of Ḥarb b. Malla (?)

The *bā* of Ḥarb and the *bin* run into each other.

10 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14346

183



Carnelian. Oval, flat top and base rendered white through heating or burial. Three lines of angular script.

صدقه  
بن علقمه  
ثقتة بالله

Lines 1–3: Ṣadaqa b. ‘Alqama, his trust is in God

14 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 7437 (N 1357). Acquired by A.H. Layard on his expeditions to Mesopotamia between 1845 and 1851.

184



Carnelian, red-orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.



ثِقْ بِاللّٰهِ يٰحَسَنُ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَيْهِ  
بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ

Lines 1–2: Trust in God O Ḥasan b. Muḥammad and place your reliance on him

10.5 × 8 × 2 mm

1866 12–29 130. Duc de Blacas collection

185



Haematite, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script; the central Muḥammad is large and bold, with forked terminals, and the *qāf* of *yathiq* loops upwards. There are stars on either side of the top line. Damaged in places.

بِاللّٰهِ يَثِقُ  
مُحَمَّدٌ

يُدْفَعُ بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَا يَطِيقُ

Lines 1–3: In God Muḥammad trusts. He withstands with God's (support) that which cannot be borne

It is likely that *alifs* have been missed out in both verbs: *yudāfi* *billāh mā lā yuṭāq*.

18 × 15 × 3.8 mm

1880–3651. Masson collection, no. 16

186



Carnelian, orange-brown. Oval, flat top and slightly hollowed base with bevelled sides. Two lines of pointed cursive script.

يَثِقُ بِاللّٰهِ الْمَعْبُودُ  
مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ دَاوُدَ

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Dāʿūd trusts in God the one who is worshipped.

For assonantal inscriptions such as this example and the one following, see Introduction, p. 16.

13 × 10 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 278. Christy collection

187



Carnelian, orange-brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular cursive script.

يَثِقُ بِرَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ  
مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ حَمْزَةَ

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Ḥamza trusts in the God of glory

14 × 12 × 4.1 mm

1878 12–20 199. Christy collection

188



Carnelian, red-orange. Oval, slightly convex top with bevelled sides set in a metal ring. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. On the second line the words are joined to form a continuous line.

يَثِقُ  
عَبْدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ بِاللّٰهِ

Lines 1–2: In God 'Abd b. 'Abdū trusts

The name is placed within *billāh*. (For a similar example, see Content 1987: 271, no. 11.)

17 × 10 × 6 mm

1878 12–20 15. Christy collection

### *al-tawakkul 'alā Allāh* (*'reliance on God'*)

189



Carnelian, orange-brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْحَسَنِ  
عَلَى اللَّهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan relies on God

9 × 8 × 2.5 mm

1878 12–20 195. Christy collection

190



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with double S-shaped ornament below.

دَوَيْكُ بْنُ جَامِلٍ  
عَلَى اللَّهِ يَتَوَكَّلُ

Lines 1–2: Dūyak b. Jāmīl relies on God

A Dūyak (Dawyak?) who was the *mawlā* of Banī Mulaḥ b. 'Umrū is mentioned in Ṭabarī (1967, vol. 2: 286). An alternative might be Duwayd, a diminutive of Dāʿūd. For the second name, it may be that Jāmīl rather than Jāmīl is intended.

9 × 7 × 1 mm

OA+ 14251



191



Rock crystal. Oval cabochon, carved on the flat side, with traces of blue glaze on the back. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals; the words are joined to form a continuous line.

توكل على الرحمن  
احمد بن عبد الرحمن

Lines 1–2: Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥman rely on the Merciful one

The *alifs* of both Raḥmāns are omitted. The use of glaze on this seal is a highly unusual feature.

16 × 10 × 6.5 mm  
1853 3–28 9. Auckland collection

### *dhikr al-mawt* (‘remembrance of death’)

192



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script. Dots above the *tā’* of *mawt*. A dotted border around the edge.

خليل اذكر  
الموت وتوكل تكفا

Lines 1–2: Khalīl remember death, rely (on God), that will suffice you

For phrases referring to death see **Cat. 286**, and for the phrase *tawakkul tukfā* see **Cat. 247**. For the use of dots in early inscriptions see Kaplony 2008.

13 × 11 × 3.5 mm  
1866 12–29 111. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 292–3, no. 128, plate IV)

193



Leaded tin bronze. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

ذكر الموت  
[أ]حمد بن عبد الله

Lines 1–2: Remembrance (*dhikr*) of death Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh (or *dhakara*, the optative – ‘may he remember death’ – or [*a*]dhkir, ‘remember’)

10 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 89. Christy collection

### *lillāh/billāh* (‘by’ or ‘for God’)

The phrases *lillāh* (‘to or for God’) and *billāh* (‘in, by or through God’) occur in the early Islamic period: in a variety of early contexts in the Abbasid period; regularly on coins from the reign of al-Amīn onwards (Lane-Poole, 1875–90, vol. 1: 235); on glass stamps (Morton 1985: 157, no. 523); and on early rock inscriptions (al-Rāshid 1995: 136, no. 52). In some contexts, *billāh* may also be an abbreviation of the phrase *yathiq billāh*, ‘trusts in God’.

194



Haematite, black. Round, flat top and base cut down. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

[ب]الله  
علي بن با جعفر

Lines 1–2: To God [‘A]lī b. Bā Ja‘far

The inscription is not entirely clear. The first word on the second line could also be [*wa*]lī. The ‘*ayn* of Ja‘far is squashed. Names in the Ḥaḍramaut frequently include *Bā*. This might suggest a Yemeni origin for the owner of the seal. An alternative reading for the name might be [‘A]lī b. Aḥmad.

7 × 6 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 107. Christy collection

195



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

محمد بن  
عثمن لله

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. ‘Uthman to God  
The *alif* of ‘Uthmān is omitted.

12 × 10 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14374

196



Leaded tin bronze. Rectangular, flat, set in bronze mount. Two lines of angular script.

بالله  
محمد بن جعفر

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Ja‘far in God

12 × 10 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 14. Christy collection

197



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of script. Damaged and cut down at the base.

لله يوسف بن  
[...] السيف عبد  
[الله]

Lines 1–3: To God. Yūsuf b. [...] al-Sayf is the servant of [God]

The tops of letters visible on the third line suggest the word *Allāh*.

8 × 6 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 197. Christy collection

198



Carnelian, dark orange. Flat top with bevelled sides and convex barrel-shaped base, cut down. Three lines of cursive script; traces of the angular style in the forked terminals.

بإله  
أحمد بن محمد  
ولي آل محمد

Lines 1–3: In God. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad is the friend of the family of Muḥammad

There are traces of a letter visible at the base of the seal where it has been cut down; this may have been *yathiq*, completing the phrase *yathiq billāh*.

10 × 10 × 5.5 mm  
1878 12–20 193. Christy collection

199



Jasper, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. The whole is underlined by the return of the *hā* of *billah*.

محمد بن القسم بالله

Muḥammad b. al-Qasim in God

The *alif* of Qāsim is omitted.

8 × 3 × 2 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 6

200



Haematite, black. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cut down through the second line. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بإله  
[...]

Lines 1–2: The only clear word is *Allāh/billāh*

10 × 6 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 106. Christy collection

*shukr lillāh* ('thanks to God')

201



Jasper, red. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script.

بإله  
بشاره البدرى  
شاكراً

Lines 1–3. Bashāra al-Badrī is thankful to God

18 × 13 × 2 mm  
2003 10–21 1. Presented by Bernard McAvoy

*walī Allāh* ('the friend of God')

202



Haematite, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals, S-shaped design below the inscription.

ولي الله محمد  
بن عبيد الله

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. 'Ubaydallāh is the friend of God

On stone inscriptions the phrase is sometimes turned around: *Allāh walī 'Abd al-Salām* (God is the protector of Abd al-Salām), for example (Sharon 1997: 95).

11 × 8 × 3 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 12

203



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. These are joined together to form a line through the tops of both *Allāhs*.

لله  
محمد بن علي ولي الله

Lines 1–2: To God. Muḥammad b. 'Alī is the friend of God

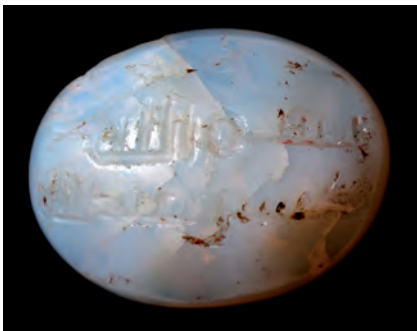
18 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
1880–3644. Masson collection, no. 9

*The basmala and the shahāda*

The *basmala* (or *bismillah*)—the invocation '*bi-ism allāh al-rahmān al-rahīm*' ('in the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate'), also known as the *tasmiya* ('uttering God's name')—occurs 114 times in the Qur'ān. It is invoked by Muslims before any important action. Muḥammad is quoted as saying, 'Every important affair that one does not begin with [the phrase] "in the name of God" is void' (Carra de Vaux, 'Basmala', EI<sup>2</sup>). The *shahāda* is the Islamic profession of faith and is the declaration: 'There is no god but Allāh, and Muḥammad is the messenger of God.' It is made up of two phrases: 'there is no god but God' is in Qur'ān 37:35 and 47:19, and 'Muḥammad is the Prophet of God' is in Qur'ān 48:29. Both the *basmala* and the *shahāda*, which often appear in abbreviated form, are frequently inscribed on seals and amulets (see **Cat. A3ff.**) on account of their benedictory power (Gimaret, 'Shahāda', EI<sup>2</sup>). The earliest dated occurrence of the *basmala* is on Greek and Arabic papyri in 642, and it starts to appear on Arab-Sasanian coins from 31/651–2 (Hoyland 1997b: 688–9). Among the earliest dated occurrences of the *shahāda* are Umayyad milestones from the reign of 'Abd al-Malik (685–705) (Hoyland 1997b: 700). Other early occurrences are among the Syrian Hajj route inscriptions (al-Kilabi 2009: no. 19 etc.).



204



Chalcedony, white translucent. Oval cabochon, cracked. Two lines of angular script.

بسم الله  
كيسن عبد الله

Lines 1–2: In the name of God Kaysan (?) is the servant of God

The name is not entirely clear. *Kaysān* with the *alif* omitted is a possibility and attested in Ṭabarī (1967, vol. 1: 311 and elsewhere). An alternative might be Kays b. ‘Abdallāh with the *sin* and the *bin* run together. The style of the script can be paralleled with Umayyad period inscriptions (see Morton 1985: 67, no. 92, for a very similar *basmala*, and Table 1A in the Introduction).

13 × 10 × 6 mm  
1853 3–28 10. Auckland collection

205



Leaded tin bronze (also containing zinc) seal and handle. The seal is engraved with two lines of angular script facing in both directions. With wedge-shaped and foliate terminals, the terminals of some of the letters loop upwards. The base of the mount is also engraved in angular script and with a crescent above the inscription.

ختم الله بخير عملي  
و توكلني على خالقي

Base of handle

محمد

Line 1: God has put a stamp on the efficacy of my actions

Line 2: and my trust is in my creator

Base of handle: Muḥammad

Top: 17 × 16 × 4 mm; base: 11 × 10 × 15 mm;  
overall height 18 mm  
1861 12–21 18

206



Haematite, dark grey. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides, cut down. Two lines of script with forked terminals.

لا اله الا [الله]  
عبد الله [...]

Lines 1–2: There is no god but [Allāh] (the first part of the *shahāda*). His servant al-[...]

8 × 9 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 104. Christy collection

207



Goethite, black. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides, cut down. Two lines of angular script, with forked terminals. The style is strikingly similar to Cat. 206.

لا اله الا [الله]  
عده [sic] القا [سم]

Lines 1–2: There is no god but [Allāh] (the first part of the *shahāda*). His servant al-Qā[sim] (?)

The *bā* of ‘*abduhu* is missing.

9 × 9 × 1.5 mm  
1878 12–20 100. Christy collection

## *al-‘izzatu lillāh* (‘glory to God’) and various phrases

For examples of phrases with *al-‘izz* or *al-‘izzatu lillāh*, see Cat. 305ff.

208



Tin bronze. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. A crescent is above the first line.

العزة لله  
احمد

Lines 1–2: Glory belongs to God, Aḥmad

9 × 7 × 0.5 mm  
1878 12–20 79. Christy collection

209



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script with an angular *kāf* on the second line. Crosses in the background.

غفر بعافا  
لحسن بكافا

Lines 1–2: He pardoned Ḥasan with good health and sufficiency

Although the last letter of ‘*āfā* and *kāfā* are written as *alifs*, it may be that a *tā* ‘*marbūṭa* is intended, which would be more common.

14 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 163. Christy collection



210



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides. Damaged. Three lines of angular script forming almost continuous lines.

انا مولى لامامي  
خاتم السبع المثاني  
عيسى بن الحسين

Lines 1–3: I am a *mawlā* (client, servant) of my master who has come to the end of the recitation of the whole of the Qur'ān. 'Īsā b. al-Ḥusayn

The expression *al-sab' al-mathānī* is thought to refer to the whole of the Qur'ān or to the seven verses of the *fātiḥa*. In Qur'ān 15:87 is the phrase 'and we have given you seven of the *mathānī* and the wondrous Qur'ān'. (For a discussion of the etymology of this term and the various theories as to its meaning, see Welch, 'al-Kur'ān', EI<sup>2</sup>. I am grateful to Mushalah al-Mureikhi for the reading of this seal.) Learning the Qur'ān by heart is traditionally enjoined on young Muslims. When it was achieved, there was often great celebration; the engraving of a seal to commemorate this would have been an appropriate reward. For the term *mawlā*, see Cat. 20.

15 × 12 × 3 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 4

211



Haematite, rectangular flat top and uneven base, straight sides, chip on face partially obscuring the first line. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

قاسم  
نعم الله (؟)

Lines 1–2: Qāsi[m] (?). How wonderful is God

The reading here is tentative because of the damage in the centre of the seal. If this is Qāsim, then the first tooth of the letter *ṣīn* is missing. On the second line, the most likely reading is *ni'ma Allah*.

11 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 99. Christy collection

212



Carnelian, orange-brown to pale orange. Flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. On the second line the *bin* is squeezed between Muḥammad and 'Alī.

محمد بن علي يرجوا  
محمد بن علي ينجوا

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. 'Alī hopes Muḥammad b. 'Alī seeks deliverance

Although there are *alifs* at the end of *yarjū* and *yanjū*, these are not grammatically necessary and are probably ornamental.

14 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
OA + 14313

213



Jasper, red, with holes at either end for suspension. Four lines of cursive script with dots around the sides.

المعز الامين  
اقبل ولا تخف  
حسين  
يوسف

Lines 1–4. The Mighty, the Trustworthy, accept and do not fear. Ḥusayn, Yūsuf

The Mighty (*al-mu'izz*) is one of the Names of God. *Al-Amin* is in Redhouse (1880: 17, no. 42).

27 × 9 × 7 mm  
OA+ 13493

214



Metasiltstone, grey-green. Oval, flat with raised edge, damaged in parts. Inscription in angular script in the centre and around the margin, the latter largely obliterated.

الدولة دائمه

Centre: The kingdom is everlasting

ابو منصور ال[...]

Margin: Abū Maṣṣūr al-[...]

25 × 19 × 6 mm  
OA+ 14330

## 4. Phrases

The seals included here are inscribed with phrases in Arabic, sometimes whole or parts of verses from the Qur'ān, pious legends, and references to God, the Prophet Muḥammad and the Twelve Imams (see also Introduction, 'Phrases'). The seals in this category correspond to Kalus 1981: sect. I.1.1: 11–17; Kalus 1986: sect. I.1.1: 4–5; Content 1987: 266–75.

### Verses from the Qur'ān

The following seals are inscribed with Qur'ān *sūra* 112 (*al-Ikhlāṣ*). This is one of the most potent expressions of the Muslim faith. It also occurs engraved in positive on amulets (see Cat. A14, A26–34, A82, A87). Along with the 'throne verse' (*sūra* 2: 255) it is one of the most frequently cited Qur'ānic texts in a wide variety of contexts (Blair 1998: 214; Hoyland 1997b: 7, no. 39).

215



Carnelian, dark orange. Rectangular with high bevelled sides and hollowed base. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد  
ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Say 'He is God, One,  
God, the Eternal,  
Who has not begotten nor has been  
begotten.  
There is no equal to Him.' (Qur'ān 112)

30 × 13 × 6.5 mm  
OA+ 13509

216



Carnelian, dark orange. Square, flat top with bevelled sides, cut down. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

[قل هو الله احد الله الصمد  
ولم يكن له كفوا  
حد]

[Say 'He is God, One,  
God,] the Eternal,  
[Who has not begotten nor has been  
begotten.]  
There is no equal to Him. (Qur'ān 112)

The original seal must have been wider on both sides to accommodate the complete verses.

10 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 175. Christy collection

### Allāh rabbī, Allāh naṣīḥī ('God is my Lord and my counsel')

The phrase *Allāh rabbī* ('God is my lord') occurs at least five times in the Qur'ān, for example 3:51: 'It is Allāh who is my lord and your lord.' According to Mas'ūdī, the phrase was engraved on the seal of the Abbasid caliph al-Hādī (785–6; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 140, n. 15). On objects, it occurs on Arab-Sasanian coins (Walker 1941: M4) in the form: *bism Allāh rabbī* (dated 31/651), and in the phrase *rabbī Allāh al-aḥad* (struck in 48/668–9; Walker 1941: 51, 3). It also appears on early glass stamps (Morton 1985: nos. 512–21, 551–2 and 554).

217



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script; *rabbī* is underlined by the return of the letter *yā*.

ربي  
الله

Lines 1–2: God is my lord

As in the Qur'ān, it is presumably intended that it should be read *Allāh rabbī*.

9 × 9 × 2.7 mm  
1878 12–20 200. Christy collection

218



Sardonyx, pale brown and white. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a brass ring. Two lines of angular script, each underlined by the returns of the final letters *yā*. Around the inscription is a dotted border.

الله نصرتي  
والله مطلبي

Lines 1–2: God is my help and God is the one I seek

Stylistically similar to Cat. 324. For a seal with a similarly dotted border see Kalus 1981: 21, no. I.1.2.17, and Table 2 in this catalogue.

14 × 10 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 110. Duc de Blacas Collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 286, no. 124)

219



Lapis lazuli, opaque blue. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of facing angular script.

الله المعين  
والمصير (?)

Lines 1–2: God is the helper; destiny (?)

12.5 × 11 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14331



### Phrases from the root *amana* and *ṣabara*

This word has a variety of meanings: to be faithful, to believe in God, to feel safe. Although there are no examples here, Gignoux and Kalus (1982: 143–4) cite a number of caliphal seals which begin *amantu* ('I believe in') or *fulān yu'min* ('someone believes in'). Phrases with *amana* are also among the Syrian Hajj route inscriptions (al-Kilabi 2005: nos. 2, 4 etc.).

220



Carnelian, dark orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with foliate terminals which loop upwards and form arabesques.

بالله  
امن من امن

Lines 1–3: Safe is he who believes in God  
The second *amana* mirrors the first with *man* in the triangle above. A very similar seal in the Iraq Museum, but which does not appear to have the *man*, has been read as *āmanā* (repeated twice in mirror writing) *billāh* (Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: 35, no. 29).

17 × 12 × 2 mm  
OA+ 11470

221



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon, carved on the flat side, chipped. One line of angular script with forked terminals. A star is above the inscription.

امن من امن بالله

Safe is he who believes in God  
15 × 10.5 × 4.7 mm  
1878 12–20 164. Christy collection

222



Garnet, dark red. Round, flat top and base. One line of angular script with elongated and forked terminals.

امن من [امن]

Safe is he

'Who believes in God' is understood.

6 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 133. Christy collection

223



Carnelian, dark orange. Rectangular, flat top and base. One line of angular script with forked terminals of *alif* and *bā'*. The terminals of the letters *rā'* loop upwards and backwards. The seal has been cut down on the left (of the reversed image).

لمن صبر

To the one who is patient

The interpretation relies on acceptance of the lack of a separate tooth for the letter *ṣād*, a feature of some early inscriptions (Grohmann 1971, vol. 2: chart II).

13 × 6 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 172. Christy collection

### The basmala ('in the name of God')

For a discussion of the use of this phrase on other seals, see Cat. 204.

224



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon, white in places, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Two lines of angular script.

بسم  
الله

In the name of God

For a similar example in the Iraq National Museum, see Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: 24, no. 7.

10 × 9 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 222. Christy collection

225



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

بسم  
الله

Lines 1–2: In the name of God

11 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14349

### *billāh/lillāh* ('by, through, or unto God') and other phrases

It is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether the word inscribed on the seals is *billāh* (through God), *lillāh* (unto God) or simply *Allāh*. The earliest dated Islamic context for the use of *lillāh* is on Arab-Sasanian coins struck in 34–50/654–70 (Hoyland 1997b: 689). (For other phrases with *billāh/lillāh* see also Cat. 194ff.)

226



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with terminals angled downwards. A figure of eight ornament in the centre represents the second *alif*. A cross motif below the line.

بالله

Through God

18 × 11.5 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 296. Christy collection



227



Chalcedony, white with blue glaze. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script in mirror writing with terminals angled downwards.

لله

Through God  
Repeated in both directions.

For another example in the collection where a glaze has been applied, see **Cat. 191**.

10 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 64. Christy collection

228



Amphibolite, dark green with yellow vein. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. A rectangle with diagonal line is placed above the central part of *Allāh*; what word this is remains unclear. A star is below the line.

لله

God

16 × 13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 121. Christy collection

229



Blue glass fragmentary ring inscribed in angular script on the central face, with decorative knot patterns on the face and shanks.

الصبر والعلا

Patience and loftiness (?)

*Wa* ('and') after the knot is written upside down and backwards to echo the loop of the *rā*' of *ṣabr*. See also **Cat. 223** for a similarly written letter *ṣād* of *ṣabr*.

14 × 10 × 4 mm  
OA+ 13491

230



Carnelian, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals which form a line when joined. A star is below the last line.

بالله  
العصر لله

Lines 1–2: In or through God. The Day of Judgement is for God

19 × 4.2 mm  
1878 12–20 226. Christy collection

231



Ring, tin bronze. Oval, flat top with dentillated mount. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. The words are joined to form a continuous line.

انه لعمل خالد  
قل الله كمالك

Lines 1–2: It is an action that is everlasting. Say, 'to God belongs your perfection'

An alternative for the first line is 'act according to God' (*lillāh a'mal ḥālak*)

12 × 9 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 18. Christy collection

*tubnā lillāh* ('we have repented to God') or *shā'a Allāh* ('God wills')

The inscriptions on the following group of seals can be variously interpreted. *Tubnā lillāh* ('we have repented to God') is probably the most likely reading; similar seals in the Iraq National Museum (Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: nos. 15 and 26) and unpublished examples in Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyah, Kuwait, have been read in this way. *Shā'a Allāh*, short for *mā shā'a Allāh* ('as God wills'), which frequently appears on seals and amulets, is another possibility. For a seal stone in this style from Birka in Sweden, see Introduction (p. 14).

232



**The Ballycottin cross brooch**

Gilt copper alloy brooch, with twelve dome-headed, silver rivets in lobes at the outer corners and in the angles around the crossing. Each arm is decorated with different stylised animals in profile. Carolingian, of a type found in Germany west of the Elbe, the Netherlands and the Rhine delta c. eighth to ninth century. The collet is set with an Islamic black glass seal.

تبنا  
لله

We have repented to God

Brooch: max. width 44 mm  
Seal: 12 mm (max.) × 11 mm (max.)  
P&E 1875 12–11 1. Found at Ballycottin, southern Ireland, and acquired in 1875. (Porter and Ager 1999)

233



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base, bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

تَبْنَا  
لِلَّهِ

Lines 1–2: We have repented to God

11 × 9 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 130. Christy collection

234



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

تَبْنَا  
لِلَّهِ

Lines 1–2: We have repented to God

11 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 115. Christy collection

235



Rock crystal. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

تَبْنَا  
لِلَّهِ

Lines 1–2: We have repented to God

10 × 11.5 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14329

236



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with high bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

تَبْنَا  
لِلَّهِ

Lines 1–2: We have repented to God

10 × 15 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 171. Christy collection

236



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and slightly hollowed base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

تَبْنَا  
لِلَّهِ

Lines 1–2: We have repented to God

11 × 9 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 117. Christy collection

238



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and uneven base. One line of angular script, words joined together.

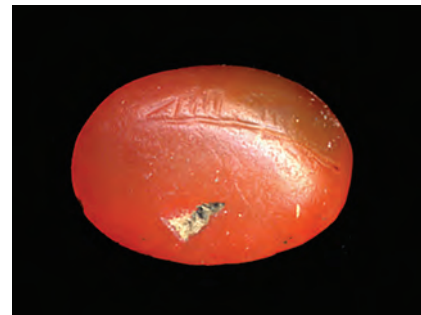
تَبْنَا لِلَّهِ

We have repented to God

For whichever reading, whether *tubnā* or *shā'a Allāh*, on this seal and the next, the final *alifs* of *tubnā* or *shā'a* and the initial *alif* of *Allāh* would have to double up.

11 × 9 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 116. Christy collection

239



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with slightly convex base. Surface worn and chipped. One line of angular script, words joined together.

تَبْنَا لِلَّهِ

We have repented to God

11 × 8 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 145. Christy collection

240



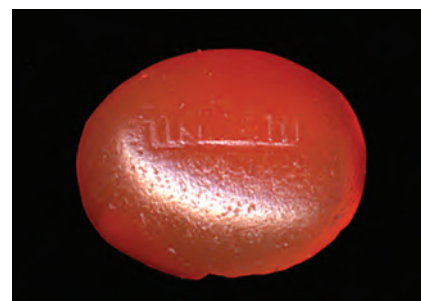
Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon and flattish base with one line of angular script, words joined together.

تَبْنَا لِلَّهِ

We have repented to God

13 × 9 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 142. Christy collection

241



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon, worn and chipped. One line of angular script.

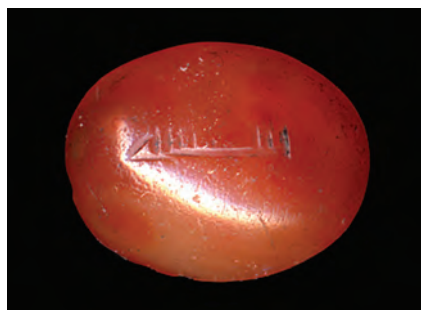
تَبْنَا لِلَّهِ

We have repented to God

10 × 7 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 144. Christy collection



242



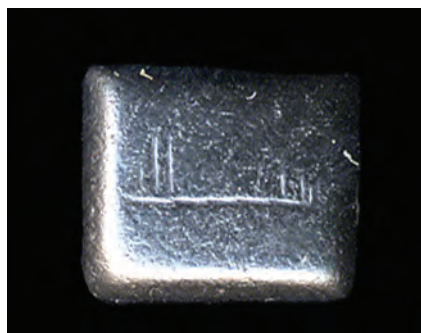
Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with bevelled sides. One line of angular script.

تَبْنَا لِلّٰه

We have repented to God

12 × 9 × 6 mm  
1880–3669. Masson collection

243



Jasper, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides, surface very worn. One line of angular script.

تَبْنَا لِلّٰه

We have repented to God.

8 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 118. Christy collection

244



Carnelian, orange. Oval flat top and slightly convex base. One line of angular script, words joined.

تَبْنَا لِلّٰه (؟)

We have repented to God

There are two strokes after the *alif* which could be later additions, or this could be read as *shā'ahu Allāh*, 'His will is in God', or *salām lillāh*, 'peace is with God'.

10 × 9 × 2 mm  
1838 9–8 3

### *ta'ālā Allāh* ('God is exalted' or 'God is ever almighty')

This phrase occurs a number of times in the Qur'ān, as for example: 'May God, the true king, be exalted' (Qur'ān 20:114). In the reading below, the usual *alif maqṣūra* is written as *lām-alif*. It occurs in this form in early Arabic (Hopkins 1984: 14).

245



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flattish top with bevelled sides and slightly hollowed base. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

تَعَالَا  
اللّٰه

God is exalted

The first *alif* of *ta'ālā* is omitted.

11 × 9 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 194. Christy collection

246



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval cabochon with flat base. One line of angular script; the words joined together to form a continuous line.

تَعَالَا اللّٰه

God is exalted

Extra *alif* in *Allāh*.

11 × 7 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 12. Auckland collection

### *tawakkul tukfā* ('rely [on God]'; 'trust or confidence [in God] will suffice you')

One of the sayings recorded by Maidānī (1955: 132), the phrase *tawakkul tukfā* is found on Nīshāpūr epigraphic pottery (Ghouchani 1986: nos. 6, 36 and 110) and on Fatimid ceramics (Bayani-Wolpert 1980: 297–8 and 302). For its use on seals, including a form of the phrase on a seal of the Abbasid caliph al-Mu'tadid billāh, see Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 145. It sometimes has an accompanying phrase *sal tu'tā* ('ask and you will receive') (Content 1987: 273, no. 14).

247



Carnelian, dark orange. Flat top and hollowed base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

بِاللّٰه  
تَوَكَّلْ تَكَا [sic]  
ثَق

Lines 1–3: Rely on God, and you will be satisfied

The most likely reading here is *tukfā* with the *fā* left out and *alif* instead of *alif maqṣūra*. A seal in the Zucker collection has the same feature (Content 1987: 273, no. 14). The last line could be an abbreviated *yathiq*, 'he trusts in God' (see Cat. 150ff.).

14 × 11 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 14315

248



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides cut down from an oval cabochon. One line of angular script, the words joined into a continuous line underlined by the return of the *yā*' of *tukfā*. Foliate terminal of the *lām*.



توكل تكفى

Rely on God and you will be satisfied

12 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
1853 3–28 16. Auckland collection

249



Carnelian, bright orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides, partially whitened as a result of weathering or burial. One line of angular script with forked terminals. The words are joined to form a continuous line underlined by the return of the *alif maqṣūra* of *tukfā*. The *kāf* and *alif maqṣūra* of *tukfā* extend upwards to match *Allāh*.

على الله توكل تكفى

Rely on God [and] you will be satisfied

10 × 7 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 176. Christy collection

250



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut from an oval cabochon. Two lines of angular script, a band of angular dashes around the margin.

توكلت

علا [sic] الله

I put my trust in God

*ʿAlā* is written with a *lām-alif* at the end instead of *lām* and *alif maqṣūra* (Hopkins 1984: 14). For a seal with a similar dotted border, see **Cat. 324**.

13.5 × 11 × 6 mm  
OA+ 14364

251



Metal, set in a ring. Angular script on three lines with *tawakkaltu* written in larger size.

الله

توكلت

على

Lines 1–3: I put my trust in God

14 × 12 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14360

### *al-ḥamdu lillāh* ('Praise be to God')

This is sometimes abbreviated to *al-ḥamd* or *ḥamd*. It also occurs in its longer form of *al-ḥamdu lillāh rabb al-ʿālimīn* ('Praise be to God, lord of the worlds'), from the *Fātiḥa*, the opening chapter of the Qurʾān, and other verses. It occurs altogether 39 times in the Qurʾān in various forms. The phrase also occurs on Arab-Sasanian coins in the form of *lillāh al-ḥamd* (see Hoyland 1997b: 694 for its occurrence on coins of the Zubayrid governor of Fars, ʿUmar ibn ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Maʿmar 67–70/686–89; Walker 1941: 98, no. 193ff.; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 140 n. 12).

252



Serpentinite, dark green. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script. A V-shaped ornament below the script.

الحمد

Praise

14 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 135. Duc de Blacas collection

253



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

الحمد

الله

Lines 1–2: Praise be to God

11 × 9 × 1.5 mm  
1878 12–20 113. Christy collection

254



Jasper, black. Oval flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script. The seal is either broken or has been cut down, which would explain why the last word is missing.

الحمد لله رب

Praise be to God, Lord

Implicit here is 'of the worlds'.

14 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 112. Christy collection

255



Jasper, opaque black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

الحمد لله

رب العلمين

Lines 1–2: Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds

The *alif* of *ʿālimīn* is omitted.10 × 8 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14338

256



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with high bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script.

بالحمد لله  
الله  
اثق

Lines 1–3: Thanks be to God I trust in God  
Alternatively *yathiq* ('he trusts in God').  
For the phrase *yathiq billāh* attached to a name, see **Cat. 150ff**.

10 × 9 × 4 mm  
OA+ 11471

### *ḥasbī Allāh* ('God is sufficient for me')

The phrase *ḥasbī Allāh* appears in the Qur'ān as follows: If they turn away, say, 'God is sufficient for me. There is no god but Him. I put my trust in Him' (Qur'ān 9:129); Say, 'God is sufficient for me. Those who trust put their trust in Him' (39:38). According to Ibn 'Arabī (1972, vol. 1: 114) and Qalqashandī (1913–18, vol. 5: 354), the phrase was engraved on the seal of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (775–85) (Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 142; no. 34). This is one of the most popular phrases engraved on seals, as can be seen from the number in the British Museum collection and elsewhere (for example, Content 1987: 267, nos. 1 and 2). On a group of clay seals (Content 1987: 356), it occurs in the following way: *al-walīd ḥisbuhu Allāh wa na'ima al-wakīl* (Kalus 1981: 12, no. 1.1.3; Kalus 1986: 4, no. 1.1.1.2; Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: 23, no. 5). It also appears in other early Islamic contexts: for example, on an Arab-Sasanian coin of Muṣ'ab ibn al-Zubayr struck in Basra in 66/685–6, in the phrase – as on the clay seals of al-Walīd above – *muṣ'ab ḥisbuhu Allāh* (Walker 1941: 102; Hoyland 1997b: 694); and on early Islamic glass stamps (Morton 1985: 156, nos. 517 and 518).

257



Haematite, dark grey. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. A cross motif below the inscription. The word *ḥasbī* is placed above the centre of Allāh.

حسبي  
الله

Lines 1–2: God is sufficient for me

16 × 13 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 103. Christy collection

258



Rock crystal. Oval cabochon. One line of angular script.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

11 × 9.5 × 6 mm  
OA+ 14327

259



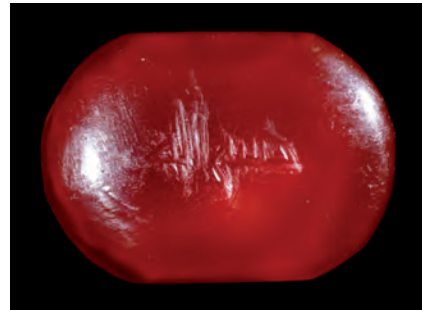
Rock crystal. Oval cabochon with flat base. One line of angular script.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

12 × 9 × 7 mm  
OA+ 14326

260



Carnelian, dark orange. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with straight sides. One line of angular script.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

14 × 10 × 3 mm  
1943 10–94. Godwin-Austen collection

261



Rock crystal. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script. Around the border a design of triangles. *ḥasbī* is underlined by the return of the letter *yā*.

حسبي الله

Lines 1–2: God is sufficient for me

A similar example is in the Iraq National Museum (Naqshabandi and al-Horri 1975: 23, no. 5).

14 × 12 × 2 mm  
OA+ 11466

262



Tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top and base with straight sides. One line of angular script.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

14 × 7 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 80. Christy collection



263



Lead tin bronze. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, surface worn. One line of angular script.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

12 × 8 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 86. Christy collection

264



Low-zinc brass. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script inlaid in black.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

9 × 7 × 1.5 mm  
1878 12–20 92. Christy collection

265



Haematite. Round, cut down on right side. The initial *ḥā'* and the final *yā'* loop upwards in an elegant composition with foliate terminals.

[...]حسبي

[God is] sufficient for me

11 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14336

266



Lead tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top with bevelled sides. The base is bevelled down towards a flat centre. One line of angular script with forked terminals, underlined by the return of the *yā'*.

حسبي

My sufficiency (sufficient for me)

Short for *ḥasbī Allāh*, God is sufficient for me

16 × 13 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 74. Christy collection

267



Carnelian, red-orange, translucent. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script; *ḥasbī* is underlined by the return of the letter *yā'*.

حسبي الله

God is sufficient for me

10 × 7 × 3.2 mm  
1878 12–20 192. Christy collection

268



Chalcedony, brown and partially white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a metal ring. Two lines of cursive script with slightly forked terminals. Stars above and below the inscription.

حسبي الله وكفا

Lines 1–2: God is sufficient for me and that is enough

*Kafā* is written with *alif* rather than *alif maqṣūra*, as often found in early Arabic inscriptions (Hopkins 1984: 14). In the Qur'ān, the phrase '*kafā billāh*' appears frequently; for example (4:45): '*kafā billāh waliyan wa kafā billāh naṣīran*' ('God is a sufficient protector and helper').

15 × 12 × 3 mm  
OA+ 13506

269



Goethite, dark grey. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. One line of angular script underlined by the return of the *yā'*.

حسبي ر[بي]

My [Lord] is sufficient for me.

As the seal has been cut down, the second word is unclear but is likely to be *rabbī* as an initial letter *rā'* is visible.

10 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 108. Christy collection

### *al-ḥayā' min al-īmān* (‘modesty is [a part of] faith’)

This phrase is one of the sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad (Wensinck 1943–88, vol. 2: 542). On a Nīshāpūr bowl in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is the associated inscription: *al-ḥayā' shu'ba min al-īmān wa'l-īmān fi'l-janna* ('Modesty is a part of faith and faith is in paradise'; (Ghouchani 1986: no. 123. For a discussion of the word *īmān* and its connotations in Islam see Gardet, 'Īmān', EI<sup>2</sup>.)

270



Carnelian, bright orange to colourless. Lozenge-shaped, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script. There are two cross motifs at each end of the line and three strokes, two of which correspond to the diacritical marks of the *nūns* of *min* and *īmān*.



## الحيا من الامان

Modesty is (a part of) of faith

The *hamza* of *ḥayā* is not represented, as is common on early inscriptions (see Introduction, 'Grammatical and orthographic features'). *Imān* is written here as *āmān* (peace or protection).

19 × 9 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 287. Christy collection

*al-ḥukm lillāh* ('judgement belongs to God')

The phrase 'judgement or authority belongs to God' occurs in various places in the Qur'ān (e.g. 40:12; 6:57). Altogether it occurs 30 times, with the explicit phrase appearing nine times. According to Ibn 'Arabī (1972, vol. 1: 109), this phrase was used on the seal of the Umayyad caliph Hishām (724–43) (Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 148). Elsewhere, for example, it appears in an inscription from the Jawf dated 121/738–9 (Muaikel 1994: 139). A much later example of the use of this phrase is seen in glazed bricks in square Kufic in the early eighteenth-century *madrasa* of Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in Isfahan (Ghouchani 1985: fig. 130). A variation of this phrase was also a famous Muslim slogan, particularly among the Kharijites (Della Vida, 'Khāridjites', EI²).

271



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval cabochon.  
One line of angular script.

الحكم لله

Judgement belongs to God

Both the shape of the stone, which was a type used in pre-Islamic times (Bivar 1969: 142, DF 1), and the shape and spacing of the inscription suggest that this is a c. seventh- to eighth-century seal (see Table 1).

12 × 10 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 141. Christy collection

272



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed with one line of angular script.

الحكم لله

Judgement belongs to God

This reading seems the most likely but accepting some peculiarities: the base of the letter *kāf* hanging down and the *mīm* joined onto *lillāh*.

10 × 9 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 180. Christy collection

*li kull ajal kitāb* ('for each period a book is revealed')

This phrase is from Qur'ān 13:38. Yusuf 'Alī (Qur'ān, p. 616, n. 1863) suggests this means that in each age God's message is renewed. Jones (2007: 238, translates this as 'For every term there is a record'). References to the Qur'ān as a book start to occur in inscriptions from the eighth century (Hoyland 1997a: 86). For another example of this phrase on a seal, see Cat. 368).

273



Carnelian, red-orange. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

لكل اجل كتاب

For each period a book is revealed

18 × 11 × 3 mm  
1880 3664. Masson collection, no. 29

*lā ilāha illā Allāh* ('there is no god but God')

The first part of the *shahāda* (see Cat. 206ff.).

274



Jasper, black. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

لا اله  
الا الله

Lines 1–2: There is no god but God

For a similar example see Naqshabandi and Horri 1975: 41, no. 40.

12 × 14 × 1.4 mm  
1878 12–20 114. Christy collection

275



Jasper, black. Oval, slightly convex top with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

لا اله  
الا الله

Lines 1–2: There is no god but God

13 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14284

### *mā shā'a Allāh ('as God wills', and associated phrases)*

The phrases *mā shā'a Allāh*, *lā quwwah illā billāh* ('as God wills', 'there is no power except in God') are from Qur'ān 18:39, included in the verse: 'As you went into your garden why did you not say "God's will (be done), there is no power but with God"?' The phrase *shā'a Allāh* on its own is also very common in the Qur'ān. On many seals, we find the additional phrase *istaghfir Allāh* ('ask forgiveness of God'), found in Qur'ān 4:106. The phrase *lā quwwah illā billāh* was according to Mas'ūdi engraved on the seal of the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya (41–60/661–80) (Mas'ūdi 1893: 303; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 141). These phrases were frequently engraved in positive on amulets, for example **Cat. A36ff.**

276



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top with bevelled sides. The base is bevelled down towards a flat centre. Two lines of angular script; the flat projections from the terminals are joined together to form horizontal lines at the tops of the letters *alif* and *lām*. The second *lām* of *Allāh* is omitted.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله

Lines 1–2: As God wills/ there is no power except in God

The seal has been cut down and the last line may have been *istaghfir Allāh* ('ask forgiveness of God'), as on other seals.

10 × 7 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 208. Christy collection

277



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script; the flat projections from the terminals are joined together to form

horizontal lines at the tops of the letters *lām* and *alif*. The words on the first line are continuously joined.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3: As God wills/ there is no power except in God/ ask forgiveness of God

17 × 12 × 3 mm  
1880–3645. Masson collection, no. 10

278



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script; the flat projections from the terminals are joined together to form horizontal lines at the tops of the letters *lam* and *alif*. The words are joined to form continuous lines.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3: As God wills/ there is no power except in God/ ask forgiveness of God

13.5 × 11.5 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 198. Christy collection

279



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with flat base and bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals. A single line around the edge of the seal.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3: As God wills/ there is no power except in God/ ask forgiveness of God

19 × 15 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 150. Christy collection

280



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. A star is between the second and third lines. Three lines of cursive script with some angular elements in the letters.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3: As God wills/ there is no power except in God/ ask forgiveness of God

19 × 13 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 14310

281



Probably carnelian, now white as a result of weathering or burial. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3: As God wills/ there is no power except in God/ ask forgiveness of God

16 × 13 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 6. Auckland collection



282



Sardonyx, brown and white. Octagonal, with high bevelled sides, cut down. Inscriptions in angular script in the centre field and around the margin.

Margin

قل هو الله احد [الله الصمد] لم يلد ولم يولد  
[ولم يكن له] كفوا

Centre

احد  
ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Margin: Say 'He is God, the One and Only [the Eternal, Absolute], He does not beget nor is He begotten and [there is] none like unto Him' (Qur'ān 112:1–4)

Centre: None (end of verse 4 of *sūra* 112). As God wills, there is no power except in God, ask forgiveness of God

15 × 12 × 5.5 mm  
1880–3654. Masson collection, no. 19

### *mā tawfīqī illā billāh* ('and my success can only come from God')

A popular protective phrase from Qur'ān 11:88. It is also found engraved on later seals, e.g. Cat. 381.

283



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. The phrase is written within the word *billāh*. The terminals of the *lām-alif* of *illā* in the centre of the word *tawfīqī* curve outwards on either side of the straight *alif*. Two stars are below the line.

ما توفيقي الا بالله

My success can only come through God

The device of inscribing words within words is also found in, for example, Cat. 228 and 304.

14 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 174. Christy collection

### *man i'taṣam billāh* ('whoever holds firmly to God')

This phrase is from Qur'ān 3:101 (where the verb is in the jussive tense *man ya'taṣim*). It continues 'will be shown a way that is straight', which is therefore implicit in the seal inscription. The same phrase occurs with the addition of a name on Cat. 149.

284



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cut down on left side. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

من اعتصم بالله

Whoever has held firmly to God

8 × 8 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 154. Christy collection

### *man katama sirrahu* ('he who keeps his secret')

285



Jasper, black. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. It is inscribed with three lines of cursive script with diacritical marks. There are 'V' and '+' marks in the lower half of the seal.

ملك  
من كتم سره  
امر

Lines 1–3: He who keeps his secret is master of his affairs

14 × 12 × 3 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 2

### *al-mawt* ('death')

The notion of death is powerful in Islam. The Qur'ān is full of references warning of the need to believe in God before death, and the inevitability of death (*Qur'ān Concordance* 678–680). Gignoux and Kalus (1982: 148) mention two seals which include the phrase *udhkur al-mawt* ('call death to mind') and another *udhkur al-mawt yā ghafīl* ('call death to mind, O unconcerned one'); the latter, according to Ibn al-'Arabi (1972: 111), was engraved on a seal of the Umayyad caliph Marwān II (744–50). (References to death, the resurrection, and so on in early inscriptions are discussed in Hoyland 1999a: 85.) For phrases relating to death attached to a name, see Cat. 192–193.

286



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script, a cross above and below the inscription. This seal may therefore have belonged to a Christian.

اذكر الموت الان  
وتقدم لآخرتك

Lines 1–2: Call death to mind now and go to meet the end of your life

13 × 10 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14373

287



Plasma, dark green. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides and uneven base. One line of cursive script. The letters *fā'* and *zā'* have diacritical marks. The upper stroke of the *kāf* is missing.



## كفى بالموت واعظا

Death is a sufficient warning

This is found on a seal of the caliph 'Umar (634–44) (Mas'ūdi 1893: 289, in Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 148). It is a phrase based on one of the sayings of Imām 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (656–61) (Nahjul Balaagha 1996: no. 188: 151).

19 × 14 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 306. Christy collection

288



Jasper, red. Oval, flat top uneven base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script. Small crescent above the *qāf* of *yughraq*.

وَأَخْرَجْتَنِي لَمْ يَبْعُدْ وَعَلَيْهَا  
قَدْ أَحَاطَ اللَّهُ بِهَا وَكَانَ  
اللَّهُ قَوِيًّا عَزِيزًا

Lines 1–3: There is no avoiding my end.  
God has encompassed it and God is strong  
and able to enforce His will

From *wa kāna*: Qur'ān 33:25.

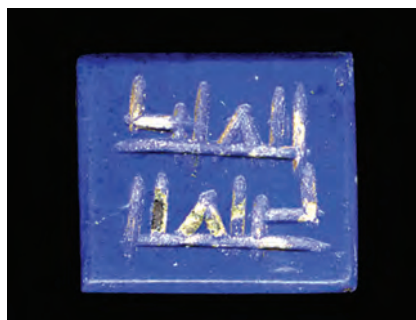
19 × 14 × 5 mm

1880–3636. Masson collection, no. 2

### *al-mulk lillāh* ('sovereignty belongs to God')

The phrase 'sovereignty', 'kingship', or 'dominion' belongs to God (sometimes translated as 'the kingdom') frequently occurs on seals and is based on Qur'ān 22:56: 'Sovereignty on that day belongs to God.' There are a number of other variants of this phrase in the Qur'ān. This phrase was reputed to have been engraved on the seal of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (Mas'ūdi 1893: 297; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 139–40). For its appearance elsewhere on pottery and textiles from the Fatimid period and up to about the twelfth century, see Bayani-Wolpert 1980: 294.

289



Lapis lazuli, blue. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script, the word *al-mulk* written in reverse on the second line.

الملك

Sovereignty

Implicit is 'belongs to God'.

12 × 10 × 2 mm

OA+ 14279

290



Garnet, pink-purple. Pear-shaped cabochon with hollowed base. One line of angular script, a star below the inscription.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

11 × 9 × 4 mm

OA+ 14290

291



Jasper, black. Round, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script, a star below the inscription.

الملك

لله

Lines 1–2: Sovereignty belongs to God

13 × 12 × 4 mm

OA+ 14351

292



Jasper, red with a mottled surface, possibly due to polishing. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals; each terminal with three branches, an arabesque ornament below.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

13.5 × 9 × 3.5 mm

OA+ 14323

293



Garnet, purple-red, transparent. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in gilt copper ring. One line of angular script with forked terminals.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

9 × 13 mm

1866 12–29 81. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 32, no. 2)

294



Carnelian, orange. Barrel-shaped, convex top with flat base and bevelled sides. One line of angular script.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

10 × 9 × 3.2 mm

1943 10–9 1. Godwin-Austen collection

295



Garnet, dark red to violet. Oval cabochon with bevelled sides and flat base. One line of angular script.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

8 × 6 × 3.5 mm

1878 12–20 139. Christy collection

296



Silver ring, bezel engraved on one line in angular script. From the excavations at Siraf (see Introduction, p. 14).

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

Dimensions overall: H: 23 mm; bezel: 9 × 11 mm  
2007 60–01. 14426

297



Carnelian, orange-brown translucent. Octagonal-rectangular cabochon with flat base. One line of angular script; a cross motif above the letter *kāf* and below the inscription. This may suggest a Christian owner.

الله الملك

To God, sovereignty

A variant on *al-mulk lillāh* above.

Alternatively, God the King (*al-malik* is one of the 'Names of God').

11.5 × 9 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 155. Christy collection

298



Carnelian, bright orange. Round cabochon. Circular inscription in angular script with forked terminals.

الملك لله الواحد القهار

Sovereignty belongs to God, the only One, the One who subdues

Qalqashandī (1913–18, vol. 6: 354) notes that this phrase was engraved on the seal of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. It is based on Qur'ān 40:16, 'Whose will be the dominion that day? That of God, the only One, the One who subdues.' *Al-wāḥid* ('the One') and *al-qahhār* ('the Dominator') are two of the Names of God. For the use of the Names of God on amulets see, for example, Cat. A1 and A2.

12 × 3 mm

OA+ 14309

299



Lead tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script.

الملك لله

رب العالمين

Lines 1–2: Sovereignty belongs to God, Lord of the worlds

10 × 8 × 1 mm

1878 12–20 73. Christy collection

*nawāl allāh* ('gift from God')

300



Carnelian, dark orange, translucent. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. The inscription is incomplete.

[...]  
نوال لله (?)

Line 1: [...]

Line 2: gift or favour from God

There is an *alif* missing in *Allāh*. It is possible that the first line may have included a name.

8 × 7 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 190. Christy collection

*subḥān Allāh* ('glory to God')

The phrase 'Glory to God' occurs at least nine times in the Qur'ān, for example in the phrase, 'Glory to God, the Lord of the throne,' (Qur'ān 21:22).

301



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged. Two lines of angular script.

سبحن  
الله

Lines 1–2: Glory to God

The *alif* of *subḥān* is omitted.

8 × 7 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 189. Christy collection



302



Jasper, black. Round, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script; an arrowhead motif below the inscription.

سبحن  
الله

Lines 1–2: Glory to God

The *alif* of *subhān* is omitted.

11 × 9.5 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14350

### *al-ṣabr* ('patience')

The virtue of patience or forbearance is stressed in a variety of ways in the Qur'ān (*Qur'ān Concordance* 399–401). The phrase 'Patience is the key to joy' is one of the sayings attributed to both the Prophet Muḥammad and Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (Maidānī 1955, vol. 1: 255). For this phrase in the context of the pottery of Nishapur, see Ghouchani 1986: 134, no. 57.

303



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top set in bronze ring. Two lines of angular script with a crescent above and a star below the inscription.

الصبر  
مفتاح الفرج

Lines 1–2: Patience is the key to joy (or release from suffering)

13 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 13497

304



Agate, white and orange; partially white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Straight-sided oval, cabochon, hollowed base. Broken on one side. Angular inscription in different sizes of script with forked terminals.

Centre

Top

Left

Right

و  
طالب  
اليمن/الله

كل الهموم

[...]

[...]

The inscription can be variously interpreted. In the centre, the first line seems to be *ṭālib* ('seeker'), written in two parts with *wa* ('and') above. Underneath could be *Allāh* written in the form of an ideogram (the central loop being the letter *lām*; see also **Cat. 330**). An alternative is *yumn* ('good fortune', prefixed by *li*, 'for') in the phrase 'seeker for good fortune'. For the sides, it could be assumed that the separate sections form one phrase. Only the upper part is clear, however: probably *kull al-humūm* ('all anxieties').

There may be an echo here of the phrase *kul hamm wa ghamm* in the Shi'ī invocation to Imām 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (see, for example, **Cat. 337** and, in positive, **Cat. A76**).

21 × 14 × 8 mm  
OA+ 13494. Talbot collection

### *al-'izz* / *al-'izza lillāh* ('glory / honour / might / power belongs to God')

In the form *al-'izza lillāh* or *lillāh al-'izza* the phrase is found three times in the Qur'ān (*Qur'ān Concordance* 564); for example (4:139), 'Do they seek glory with them? All glory belongs to God.' On the seals, it occurs in both its masculine and feminine forms. According to Mas'ūdī it was engraved on the seal of the Umayyad caliph Marwān b. al-Hakam (64–5/684–5) (Mas'ūdī 1893: 312; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 139).

305



Carnelian, bright orange. One line of cursive script with forked terminals. The final *hā'* extends back to the right to underline *Allāh*. A star is above the line.

العز لله

Glory belongs to God

10 × 9 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 146. Christy collection

306



Onyx, black and white. Oval, truncated cone with flat top and base and high bevelled sides (cut from an oval cabochon). One line of angular script.

العز لله

Glory belongs to God

11 × 7 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 126. Christy collection

307



Chalcedony, grey and white, possibly damaged by weathering or burial. Oval flat with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with a dotted margin.

العز لله

Glory belongs to God

17 × 12 × 5 mm  
1880–3647. Masson collection, no. 12



308



Carnelian, red-orange. Oval cabochon with flat base and bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with forked terminals. A star is above the 'ayn.

العز لله

Glory belongs to God

13 × 9 × 4 mm  
OA+ 11467

309



Tin bronze, oval flat with straight sides. One line of angular script, a star below.

العزة لله

Glory belongs to God

There is a letter before the 'ayn (probably a mistake).

10 × 8 × 0.5 mm  
1878 12–20 90. Christy collection

310



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top with high bevelled sides (possibly cut from oval cabochon). The seal is attached to the remains of a metal ring. One line of angular script with forked and foliate terminals with a particularly elaborate letter *tā'* marbūṭa of 'izza.

العزة لله

Glory belongs to God

16 × 12 × 5 mm  
OA+ 14369

### 'ināyat al-irāda ('watchfulness of God's will')

311



Plasma. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals facing each other on either side of a plaited band.

عنايه الإرادة  
جلالة إيبانه

Line 1: (The) watchfulness of (God's) will  
Line 2: (makes for) the glory of elucidation/ expression

This reading is possible though not certain.

12 × 9 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14283

### al-wafā ('loyalty')

In its various forms, *al-wafā'*, which means giving loyalty or fidelity to the full, is often used to denote good practice in transactions. It appears in the phrase *al-wafā' lillāh* on various glass stamps and is translated as 'honesty for God'. On an early glass example it is used as a counterstamp on an Umayyad weight (Morton 1985: 38–9, no. 5 and others). It is also noted as being engraved (in Pahlavi) on one of the seals of Sasanian ruler Khusrau I Anoshirvan (531–79) (Bivar 1969: 30).

312



Garnet, dark-red. Oval cabochon with hollowed base. One line of angular script.

الوفا

Honesty

The *hamza* is omitted.

8 × 6.5 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 135. Christy collection

313



Carnelian, orange-red. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with diacritical marks.

وفا به

He has placed his trust in Him

*Alif* instead of *alif maqṣūra* (Hopkins 1984: 14). Or, redemption is through Him, *wafā'* with the *hamza* omitted.

12 × 9 × 4 mm  
1943 10–9 3. Godwin-Austen collection

314



Carnelian, pink-orange. Slightly white as a result of burial or weathering. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script, two arrowhead motifs above the line.

وفا به

He has placed his trust in Him

13 × 11 × 4.5 mm  
1880–3642. Masson collection, no. 7

315



Carnelian, oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals, single letters above.

انت بالوفا (?)

You, in good faith (?)

This reading is tentative as the seal is not only carelessly engraved but has been damaged. The *hamza* is omitted.

11 × 8 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 156. Christy collection

### *al-jalāl lillāh* ('glory belongs to God')

*Al-jalāl*, meaning 'majesty', is one of the Names of God (Qur'ān 55:27 and 55:78, where God is described as 'majestic' (*dhū al-jalāl*)).

316



Rock crystal. Round, flat top and base with straight sides. Two lines of angular script facing each other on either side of a pseudo-Kufic decorative line

الجلال  
لله

Lines 1–2: Glory to God

Despite the missing final *lām*, this is the most likely reading. *Al-jalā* ('banishment') is unlikely in this context though mentioned in the Qur'ān (Qur'ān 59:3).

11 × 11 × 2 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 5

### Single words

#### *ihfaz* ('guard or preserve')

In addition to 'guard' or 'preserve', the verb *ḥafaza* also has the meaning of learning by heart, often of the Qur'ān.

317



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, chip on base. One line of cursive script with forked terminals. There are crosses above and below the inscription.

احفظ

Guard or preserve

13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 250. Christy collection

#### *al-'alā or al-'alī* ('nobility' or 'the most high')

*Al-'alī* ('the most high') is one of the Names of God, occurring in the Qur'ān at least eight times, for example 2:255 (last line): 'He is the most high, the supreme in glory' (*Qur'ān Concordance*: 592).

318



Carnelian, pale to bright orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script with forked terminals angled downwards; a cross motif under the 'ayn.

العل

or

العز

The most high or nobility, written with *alif* rather than *alif maqṣūra* (Hopkins 1984: 14). An alternative reading is *al-'izz*, the final stroke there for symmetry.

10 × 14 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 178

### Phrases with *makkana* ('establish, enable, give strength')

This occurs in the Qur'ān (18:95) in the following context: 'He said (the power) in which my lord has established me is better (than tribute)'.

319



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides inscribed in angular script with a forked terminal and a fan-like projection of the letter *kāf*. A circle is above the inscription and a star below.

مكني

(O God) give me strength!

This is the most likely reading. A seal published by Reinaud (1828, vol. 2: 286) is engraved with the phrase *Allāh nuṣratī wa Allāh makanatī* ('God is my help and God is my power').

13 × 11 × 3 mm  
OA+ 11464

320



Orange carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script facing each other on either side of a decorative line.

امكن  
انصر

Lines 1–2: The one who enables (others) will be victorious (?)

The device of facing lines of script with decorative bands between can be seen in other examples; see, for instance, **Cat. 311**.

11 × 9 × 3.2 mm  
1878 12–20 168. Christy collection



## Various phrases and supplications (*du‘ā*)

The phrases in this category call upon God, the Prophet Muḥammad ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, or the Twelve Imams. The latter are either named or referred to by their attributes. These phrases can be generally termed *du‘ā*. They frequently begin with *yā* (‘O’, as in ‘O God’, ‘O ‘Alī’ and so on). They were particularly popular in Iran, which explains the large number invoking the Shī‘ī imams. Used in a variety of contexts, they are frequently inscribed on amulets to secure protection (Blair 1998: 102–5).

321



Carnelian, orange. Oval with straight sides, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals. Foliate terminals extend from the *yās* of *nabī* and *shafī‘ī*.

يا نبي الله كن  
شفيعي الى الله

Lines 1–2: O Prophet of God be my intercessor with God

The preposition is usually ‘*ind*’ rather than ‘*ilā*’ in this phrase.

14 × 10 × 2 mm  
OA+ 11472

322



Carnelian. Straight-sided oval with flat top and base and bevelled sides. Most of the surface is now white as a result of weathering or burial. Two lines of cursive script with slightly forked terminals.

يا عالم خفياتي  
اغفر لي خطياتي

Lines 1–2: O You (i.e. God) Who know my secret (or my hidden affairs), forgive me my sin

17 × 11.5 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14370

323



Jasper, grey. Oval flat and flattish base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

يا عالم خفياتي  
اغفر لي خطياتي

Lines 1–2: O You (i.e. God) Who know of my secret, forgive me my sin

14 × 11 × 3 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 3

324



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut from an oval cabochon. Two lines of angular script within a border of hatched lines, each underlined by the returns of the letter *yā*.

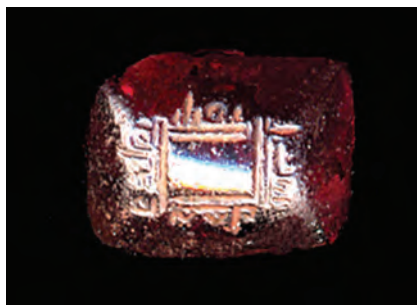
رب وفقني  
لما تحب وترضى

Lines 1–2: Lord make me worthy of what You love and approve of

The design of the seal is similar to that of **Cat. 218** in both the underlining and the border design.

14 × 10 × 5 mm  
OA+ 14367

325



Garnet, purple-red. Rectangular with convex top and hollowed base. Inscription in angular script in the form of a square.

وعافني  
انقني (?)  
اكتبني  
طهمني

Line 1: Give me good health  
Line 2: Amaze me (?)  
Line 3: Inscribe me (that is, in the book of the saved)  
Line 4: Adorn me [with blessings]

The inscription appears to be a series of requests to God, each ending in –*nī*, i.e. a request to help the owner of the seal. A possible reading is given: *ṭahama* (‘to adorn’), an obscure word found in the *Lisān al-‘Arab* (Ibn Manẓūr 1994, vol. 12: 372).

8 × 7 × 3.5 mm  
1838 9–84

326



Rock crystal. Rectangular, flat top and bevelled sides. Carved on the flat side with a line of angular script. A star is above the inscription.

نبي عزيز مر (?)

A possible reading here is ‘a glorious (‘*azīz*) Prophet’ [?] or possibly ‘a lofty (‘*alī*) Prophet’. The meaning of the last two letters, *mīm*, *rā*’ (?) is unclear.

12 × 10 × 4.5 mm  
1943 10–9 13. Godwin-Austen collection

327



Sardonyx. Oval, flat top and cone-shaped base with sharply bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script, star below the inscription.

الذكر ثمان  
الحكم ثمان

Lines 1–2: Reference [to God] is precious and wisdom is precious

15 × 10 × 4 mm  
1892 3–28 94



328



Tin bronze. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscription in angular script with forked terminals in two sizes, the word *Muhammad* written upside down on the second line in a larger size. Possible remains of an earlier inscription are below the second *Muhammad*, or they may be letter forms intended to echo the top line.

لله الله  
محمد  
محمد

Line 1: For God, God  
Line 2: *Muhammad*  
Line 3 (upside down): *Muhammad*

14 × 10 × 0.5 mm  
1878 12–20 72. Christy collection

329



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, truncated cone with bevelled edges. One line of angular script. A cross motif above and below the line.

يا محمد

O *Muhammad*  
14 × 10 × 6 mm  
1838 9–8 2

330



Carnelian, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in several places. Inscription in angular script with forked terminals in the form of a square with one word in the centre.

Centre

Sides

الله

منى محمد حقا  
وحب وضئه  
صدق الله  
محمد

Centre: God

Sides starting at top right:

Line 1: God was indeed kind to *Muhammad*  
Line 2: And loved his purity  
Line 3: God confirmed  
Line 4: *Muhammad*

The central word is likely to be a decorative form of *Allāh* with the central letter *lām* in the form of triangle in the centre. *Allāh* or *lillāh* with a trefoil or figure of eight in the centre is found on various Abbasid period inscriptions (Grohmann 1971, vol. 2: 215, fig. 241).

16.5 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 214. Christy collection

331



Tin bronze. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.

انفرد لمحمد (?)

He has withdrawn for (the sake of) *Muhammad* (?)

11 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 83. Christy collection

### *Muhammad and 'Alī*

The following seals refer to the Prophet *Muhammad* and 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, his son in law, one of the 'Rightly Guided' caliphs and the first of the Shī'ī imams. 'Alī is thus revered by both Sunnī and Shī'ī Muslims.

332



Carnelian, pink-orange, partially white as a result of weathering or burial. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular terminals, some of which are joined horizontally at the tops of the letters *alif* and *lām*.

محمد وع[لي]  
خير البشر

Lines 1–2: *Muhammad* and 'Alī are the best of men

This phrase is inscribed on tiles in glazed brick in the Friday Mosque at Isfahan (Ghouchani 1985: fig. 83).

10 × 7 × 2.8 mm  
1878 12–20 221. Christy collection

333



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with deep and sloping sides recut from oval cabochon. One line of angular script.

محمد وعلي

*Muhammad* and 'Alī

11 × 7 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 125. Christy collection

334



Jasper, yellow-brown. Oval, flat top and uneven base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals.

و  
محمد  
علي

Lines 1–3: Muḥammad and ‘Alī

10 × 14 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 122. Christy collection

335



Carnelian, dark orange. Straight-sided oval, convex top with bevelled sides and flat base. Two lines of angular script with forked terminals.

فاز بالله والنبي  
من تولا ظل علي

The one who reaches the shelter of ‘Alī will attain God and the Prophet

19 × 13 × 5 mm  
OA+ 14312

336



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The left side has been cut down. Four lines of cursive script with forked terminals. The inscription itself appears to have been recut in parts.

[من كان] يعتقد بالولا لحيدر  
[و] يحب آل محمد تحقيقا  
[فليلبس الحجر العقيق لانه  
[حجر لآل] محمد مخلوقا

Line 1: Whoever believes in devotion to Ḥaydar

Line 2: and really loves the family of Muḥammad

Line 3: let him wear carnelian for it is

Line 4: [the stone] created for [the family of] Muḥammad

This saying is found in the *Badr al-Ṭālī* by the Yemeni writer al-Shawkānī (d.1250/1834) (Shawkānī 1348/ 1929–30, 2: *Mulḥaq* 117, sect. 112, p. 73). It is attributed

to al-Sayyid al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, known as al-Abyaḍ, who died in 1101/1689. However, the seal is clearly earlier than this and therefore there must be an earlier source for this saying.

In the Yemeni context, according to Shawkānī, it appears as follows: Sayyid al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī was lord on behalf of al-Mahdī ‘Abbās in the areas of Qaṭaba, ‘Utma, Radā’ and Sanḥān. Imām al-Manṣūr ordered him to do battle in Khawlān, and he (subsequently) took a section of al-Yamāniyatayn (upper and lower areas of upper Khawlān – Khawlān al-‘Uliyā) east of Ṣan‘ā’ (al-Ḥajarī 1984, vol. 2: 786). One day Aḥmad b. Ḥasan Barakāt, a *faqīh* and an *adīb* came to visit him and he saw at his door a group of the inhabitants of al-Yamāniyatayn and they were raising their voices in complaint. His companion [presumably Sayyid al-Ḥasan] was amazed and said, ‘Look at this!’ and Aḥmad Barakāt said: ‘It is Yemeni carnelian,’ and his companion said to him, ‘Carnelian was created for the family of Muḥammad as is indicated by what has been preserved by people in their sayings: “Whoever believes in devotion to Ḥaydar (i.e. Imām ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib) and really loves the family of Muḥammad, let him wear carnelian, for it is the stone of the family of Muḥammad, the created being”’ (I am particularly grateful to Robert Hoyland and Amikam Elad for locating this reference.)

14 × 12 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 165. Christy collection

337



Haematite. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Inscription in angular script with forked and foliate terminals. One bold line in the centre and partially legible marginal inscription around.

Centre

Top right

Centre: all grief and ...

Starting top right: ... through your friendship O ‘Alī

Although the lower section of the marginal inscription is blundered, this is clearly part

كل غم و

بوليتك يا علي

of the Shī‘ī invocation ‘Call upon ‘Alī, manifestor of miracles, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O ‘Alī, O ‘Alī, O ‘Alī’.

Although it is difficult to ascertain when this phrase first occurs, it begins to appear with some frequency on fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century objects: on metalwork, particularly on seal stones (Jenkins and Keene 1983: 99), and engraved in positive on amulets (Cat. A76ff.) and in other contexts (such as glazed brick in the Friday Mosque in Isfahan, see Ghouchani 1985: fig. 4; Porter, forthcoming). This seal is inscribed in angular script and might therefore suggest an earlier date; however, the angular script is used archaistically in the Timurid period, for example in the tilework of the Aq Sarai (1379–96) (Porter 1995: pl. 6), so this is by no means certain.

21 × 19 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14335

338



Jasper, red. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with slightly forked terminals.

نعم الولي علي

‘Alī is an excellent friend

This echoes a phrase found in the Qur’ān in reference to Allāh: *fa-ni‘ma al-mawlā wa ni‘ma al-naṣīr* (‘the best to protect and the best to help’, Qur’ān 22:78); or in reference to the Prophet Job: *nā‘ima al-‘abd innahu tawwābun* (‘how excellent in our service ever did he turn to us’, Qur’ān 38:44).

13.5 × 9 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 14321

339



Jasper, yellow. Oval, flat top and uneven base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script.



حب علي علو همه  
لانه سيد الائمه

Lines 1–2: The love of ‘Alī is a sign of high-mindedness because he is the lord of the imams

Ibn al-Muwashshā (1907: 132), writing in the tenth century, includes the following phrases engraved on seals: ‘The love of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib is a duty upon the [one who is] present and the [one who is] absent’, and ‘God has sealed my affairs with good and has taken my soul in my love for ‘Alī’. In his edition of the *Muwashshā*, Bouhlal (al-Washshā 2004) notes that the latter inscription is found on a seal in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kalus 1981: 15–16, no. I.1.1.19; Gignoux and Kalus 1982: 147).

16 × 12 × 5 mm  
OA+ 14381

340



Jasper, black. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script with some pointing, stars in the four corners.

حب علي  
لانه افضل الائمه  
علو همه

Lines 1–3: The love of ‘Alī is a sign of high-mindedness because he is the best of the imams

18 × 15 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 91. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 157, no. 70)

## The Twelve Imams

A large number of seals in the collection are engraved with the names of the twelve Shī‘ī imams (see **Table 6**), sometimes with the addition of the Prophet Muḥammad and his daughter Fāṭima, who together are known as ‘the Fourteen Immaculates’ and are revered by the Twelver Shī‘a. The names also appear engraved in positive (**Cat. A67ff.**). The first of the imams is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (35–40/656–61), cousin and brother-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad and married to his daughter Fāṭima. He is both one of the Rightly Guided caliphs and the first of the Shī‘ī imams. He is revered by Sunnīs and Shī‘a. The last ‘hidden’ imam, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-‘Askarī, the Mahdī, is sometimes designated by his epithet *al-Hujja*, meaning ‘proof’. The names Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are always preceded by the definite article.

Names of the Shī‘ī imams appear in architectural contexts from the tenth century: one of the earliest examples is on wooden grilles, probably from Kūfa, dated to 363/973–4 and ordered by the Buyid ruler ‘Aḍud al-Dawla. These are discussed in the context of ‘Aḍud al-Dawla’s restoration of Shī‘ī shrines (Blair 1998: 44–5). Another early example is in the shrine of Pīr-i Bakrān in Iran, built in 1303, where the names of the imams are in square Kufic (Golombek 1974: 423; Seher-Thoss 1968: 114). The names of the Shī‘ī imams start to appear on coins of the Mongol Ilkhanids, starting with Uljaitū (1304–16), who went through various religious phases including a conversion to Shī‘ism in 1308 (Blair 1983: 297f.; Morgan 1986: 77–8). On the Twelve Imams, see Naṣr, ‘Ithnā ‘Ashariyya’, EI<sup>2</sup>; Codrington 1904: 44–6; on the Hidden Imām see Halm 1997: 38–9; on *al-Hujja* see al-Bāshā 1957: 256; Schimmel 1989: 58.

341



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval cabochon with flat base and bevelled sides. Elaborately ornamented angular script.

محمد  
علي الحسن الحسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن الحجة  
Line 1: Muḥammad  
Line 2: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī

Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad  
‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja

Muḥammad and the Twelve Imams. This seal has been variously published. Reinaud (1828, vol. 2: 196, no. 85) suggested that the design represented the six minarets of the Ka‘bah at Mecca. Grohmann described the epigraphic style as belonging to the Saljūq period (1971, vol. 2: 163, fig. 148).

20 × 15 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 100. Duc de Blacas collection

342



Carnelian, orange. Oval, cabochon with a worn and pitted surface. Three lines of angular script.

محمد علي الحسن الحسين  
علي محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن الحجة

Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī  
Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad  
‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥ[u]jja]

The Prophet Muḥammad and the Twelve Imams.

29 × 14 × 7 mm  
1853 3–28 8. Auckland collection

343



Carnelian, orange-brown. Straight-sided oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script.

علي الحسن الحسين  
علي محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن الحجة

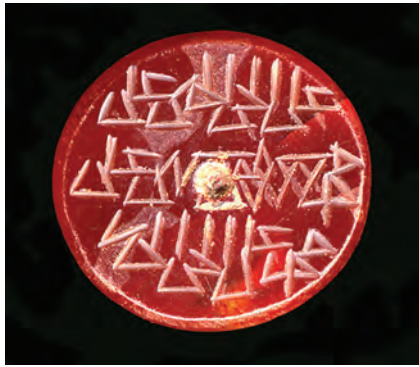
‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad  
Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan  
al-Ḥ[u]jja]

The Twelve Imams. (A similar, careless style of script to this inscription is evident in Content 1987: 298, no. 60.)

14 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 225. Christy collection



344



Carnelian, orange-brown. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, hole in centre. Three lines of angular script with slightly forked terminals.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن الحجة

‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja]

The Twelve Imams.

17.5 × 12 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14308

345



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, partially white surface, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Three lines of angular script.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن الحجة

‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja]

The Twelve Imams.

11 × 9 × 1.5 mm  
OA+ 14314

346



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. Inscription in angular script with forked terminals; carelessly written, one line in the centre and with a marginal inscription around the edge.

محمد  
علي الحسن الحسين [علي محمد جعفر]  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن

Centre: Muḥammad

Margin starting top right: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn [‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far] Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan

The Twelve Imams.

15 × 11 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 220. Christy collection

347



Chalcedony, pale-blue. Oval, flat top and bevelled sides. The base is slightly bevelled down towards a flat centre. Cursive inscription with a knot motif above the inscription.

فاطمة  
محمد  
علي الحسن الحسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن الحجة

Line 1: Fāṭima

Line 2: Muḥammad

Line 3: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja

The Twelve Imams and Muḥammad and Fāṭima. For a similar example, see Content 1987: 297, no. 59.

16 × 12 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14288

348



Pale orange carnelian, partially white, probably as a result of burial or weathering. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with a knot motif above the inscription.

فاطمة  
محمد

علي الحسن الحسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن الحجة

Line 1: Fāṭima

Line 2: Muḥammad

Line 3: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja

The Twelve Imams and Muḥammad and Fāṭima.

16 × 11.5 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 219. Christy collection

349



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with a knot motif above the inscription.

فاطمة  
محمد

علي الحسن الحسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن الحجة

Line 1: Fāṭima

Line 2: Muḥammad

Line 3: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja

The Twelve Imams and Muḥammad and Fāṭima. The epigraphy of Fāṭima and Muḥammad is very schematised.

13 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 162. Christy collection

350



Carnelian, orange-brown. Oval, flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides. Three lines of angular cursive script.

محمد علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد[د] علي الحسن الحجه

Line 1: Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī  
Line 2: Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī  
Line 3: [Muḥamma]d ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥujja

Muḥammad and the Twelve Imams.

15 × 9 × 3.8 mm  
1878 12–20 161. Christy collection

351



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon. Three lines of cursive script.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن الحجه

Line 1: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī  
Line 2: Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī  
Line 3: Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥujja

The Twelve Imams.

16 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 14292

352



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of very crude cursive script.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن محمد

Line 1: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī  
Line 2: Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī  
Line 3: [M]uḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan Muḥammad

The Twelve Imams. The last imam is designated by his given name Muḥammad. (For a similar example see Content 1987: 298, no. 60.)

12 × 10 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 159. Christy collection

353



Carnelian, orange-brown. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular cursive script.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر موسى علي  
محمد علي الحسن محمد

Line 1: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī  
Line 2: Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī  
Line 3: Muḥammad ‘Alī al-Ḥasan Muḥammad

The Twelve Imams. The last imam is designated by his given name Muḥammad, as in Cat. 352.

17 × 13 × 3.2 mm  
1878 12–20 160. Christy collection

354



Carnelian, orange-brown. Flat top and base with bevelled sides. Carelessly written angular cursive inscription around three sides of the stone, one side cut down. In the centre a star is below the central line.

[علي الحسن] الحسين علي محمد  
جعفر موسى علي مد[مد]  
علي الحسن محمد

Line 1: [‘Alī, al-Ḥasan] al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad  
Line 2: Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥa[mmd]  
Line 3: [‘Alī al-Ḥasan Muḥammad]  
Centre: Muḥammad Fāṭima

Partial inscription of the Twelve Imams, Muḥammad and Fāṭima.

11 × 9 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 191. Christy collection

355



Nephrite jade. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved in angular script with foliated terminals to the letters. The names of the Twelve Imams.

Margin

علي الحسن الحسن [sic]  
الحسين علي محمد  
جعفر موسى علي محمد

Centre

محمد

Margin: ‘Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥasan [sic] al-Ḥusayn ‘Alī Muḥammad Ja‘far Mūsā ‘Alī Muḥammad

Centre: Muḥammad

The fourth ‘Alī is missing.

25 × 5 × 1 mm  
1959 2–172

356



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top with bevelled sides. Inscription in angular script, the words forming three continuous lines.

علي الحسن الحسين علي  
محمد جعفر [موسى] علي  
محمد علي الحسن محمد

Line 1: 'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn 'Alī  
Line 2: Muḥammad Ja'far [Mūsā] 'Alī  
Line 3: Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ḥasan  
Muḥammad

Mūsā has been left out.

18 × 5 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 112. Duc de Blacas collection

357



Carnelian, pale-orange translucent. Flat top and set into a gold ring. Figure of a horseman holding a split sword in his hand. The whole figure is made up of the names of the Twelve Imams.

علي الحسن الحسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي الحسن محمد

'Alī al-Ḥasan al-Ḥusayn 'Alī Muḥammad  
Ja'far Mūsā 'Alī Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ḥasan  
Muḥammad

The figure represented is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, characteristically depicted with his famous sword *'Dhū al-faḡār'*, which he reputedly obtained as booty at the battle of Badr. The sword is traditionally shown as having two points, and this is believed to have magical connotations: the two points would put out the eyes of an enemy (Mittwoch, *'Dhū 'l Faḡār'*, EI<sup>2</sup>).

The use of calligraphy in the form of people or animals (*resim yazı* in Turkish) dates back to the fifteenth century but was particularly practised by Persian and Turkish calligraphers in the nineteenth century. The texts are often Shī'ī in nature. Many of the images have Sufi and Shī'ī associations (Safadi 1978: 136–7; Schimmel 1990: 111–113; Allan, 'Khātam, Khātim', EI<sup>3</sup>). Reinaud (1828, vol. 2: 193) describes another example similar to this in the collection of Baron de Breteuil, and there are two examples of a horseman carrying a falcon made up of the Twelve Imams in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kalus 1981: 36–7, nos. I.2.1.6 and I.2.1.7).

15 × 13 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 99. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 193–6, no. 84, pl. 3)

### St George and the dragon

358



Jasper, red. Oval, flat top and base with unevenly bevelled sides. Engraved with a horseman riding right holding a cross and with a dragon at his feet. Cursive Arabic inscriptions around the sides.

سلطان ملك  
موفق (٩)

Sultan, king or kingship

Possibly another word, *muwafaq* ('fortunate'), made up of the dragon's body and the horse's tail.

The figure clearly represents St George and the Dragon, the legendary third-century warrior saint of Cappadocia, venerated particularly in the east until the thirteenth century, after which he was taken up in the west (Hall 1974: 136–7). In the context of Islamic coins, this image starts to appear on 'Turkoman' bronze coins of the twelfth century (Lowick 1985: 170). The closest parallel to the seal among the Turkoman bronzes are coins of Qaiṣar Shāh b. Qilij Arslān of Malatya c. 1160, particularly in the form of the dragon's body (Hennequin

1985: 685, no. 1629). The image can be directly related to Crusader copper coins of Roger of Antioch (1112–19), who died fighting Il-Ghāzī of Mārdīn in a serious defeat for the Franks, and whose coins contain among the earliest representations of St George and the Dragon on coins (Metcalf 1983: 7–8; Malloy 1994: 201). On the seal, St George holds what is clearly a cross, elongated into a lance, which comes straight down behind the back of the horseman to impale the dragon, as on the Crusader coins, whereas on the Malatya coin the lance appears across his body. There are examples of the image in Anatolian stone carving of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. The Anatolian connection, the transference from Christian into Turkish-Islamic contexts, and the magical associations of the image are fully explored by Pancaroğlu (2004).

The words *suḷṭān* and either *malik* (king) or *mulk* (kingdom) reinforce the notion of sovereignty that is suggested, as it is on the coins, by the use of the horseman image (Lowick 1985: 171). The word *suḷṭān* in its literal meaning of 'holder of power or authority' began to be used by all manner of rulers from about the eleventh century, in particular by the Saljuqs (Kramers, 'Suḷṭān', EI<sup>3</sup>). The word *malik* starts to be adopted by rulers in the eastern Islamic lands such as the Buyids, Saljuqs, Ghaznavids, and others from about the tenth century. As its use increased the term became 'less majestic, for it came to imply limited sway over one realm among many, and subjection to a supreme suzerain' (Ayalon, 'Malik', EI<sup>2</sup>). The combined use of the terms and the image may therefore suggest that this seal is perhaps twelfth to thirteenth century in date, possibly from Anatolia. The fact, however, that it was one of the seals acquired by Masson in Kabul may indicate a more eastern provenance.

17 × 14 × 4 mm  
1880–3635. Masson collection, no. 1



### Poetic texts

The two following seals are unusual in that they are personal texts rather than the set formulae inscribed on most of the seals in this collection. They belong to a genre of gnomic wisdom about life and death and are melancholy in tone. Although the specific texts cannot at present be attributed, the *Kitab al-Muwashsha* lists a number of phrases which are similar in content (al-Washshā 1907: 134–5; Bouhlal 2004: 215–17). The translations (for which I am indebted to Robert Hoyland) are fairly loose, intending to capture the essence of the meaning.

359



Plasma, green. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed on four lines in simple angular script.

نحن لو شئنا لقينا  
قد عرفنا من ذهبنا  
ولكن سكتنا لا  
نقنع كان وكان

Had we wished for a meeting  
we would have known who had departed.  
But we were silent, not  
satisfied as though brooding.

20 × 21 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14254

360



Plasma, green. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Four lines of angular-cursive script.

لا تعجبوا من حضرتي  
فإنها مزارى  
الفضيل نظارات  
الغلقه استاره

Do not wonder at my presence [here]  
For it is my sanctuary [lit., 'place of visit']  
Parting allows [for] viewings  
Whereas locking shut leads to concealment

16 × 14 × 2.5 mm  
1893 7–15 11

### Uncertain phrases

361



Jasper, red. Oval, flat top, uneven base and bevelled sides. One line of cursive script with forked terminals. Chipped at the top.

منع الله/صنع الله

There are two possible readings: *ṣunʿ Allāh* ('the handiwork of God', from the phrase '(such is) the artistry of God who disposes of all things in perfect order', Qurʾān 27:88) or *manuʿa Allāh* ('God is invincible'). There are, however, problems with both these readings: with the first, the letter *ṣad* has no tooth; for the second, the letter *mīm* should be more rounded.

9 × 12 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14324

362



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and slightly hollowed base with straight sides. In the centre, double lines forming a square with single letters in the centre of each side. The lower and right sides of the square each have what seems to be the V-shaped form of the letter '*ayn*'; the top has what could be a triangular *mīm*, and may therefore stand for *al-mulk*, while on the left side may be the letter *ḥā*'. In style it resembles a seal in the Zucker collection engraved with only two lines and inscribed *ilāhī al-ḥayy* ('my God the living') (Content 1987: 269, no. 6). Another possibility is that these are variously schematised forms of *Allāh*.

13 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14352

363



Leaded tin bronze. Slightly oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. One line of angular script, a star below the inscription. The reading is uncertain.

عبدّه (?)

His servant (?)

If this is '*abduhu*', the letter '*ayn*' is unusually extended. An alternative is the name '*Azīz*'.

8 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 95. Christy collection

## 5. Re-engraved seals and seals with Arabic inscriptions on both sides

The seals in this chapter fall into two groups. The first are pre-Islamic seals that have had inscriptions in Arabic script that were added later, either on the side with an existing engraving or on the blank side. The ancient seals are of various periods: Indo-Greek, Roman, Himyarite Yemen and Sasanian. Another group of Sasanian seals in the British Museum published by Bivar also have Arabic inscriptions (Bivar 1969: 104, no. HI 2/120303; 114, no. NG 6/119683; 27, no. GI 5/120328).

The second group are Islamic seals that have been cut down and re-engraved on the other side of the stone at different times. That this appears to have been a relatively common practice is seen from the number of seals elsewhere in this catalogue that have been cut down ready for re-engraving but the re-engraving has not taken place (see, for example, **Cat. 156**). A number of re-engraved seals bear dates and these are included in the section on dated seals.

### Re-engraved ancient seals

364



Carnelian, dark orange-brown. Rectangular with cut sides. Indo-Greek seal *c.* second century BC engraved with two facing female figures. Tyche, on the left with a cornucopia in her right hand, is turning towards the winged Nike, who is about to place a crown on her head. On the

reverse is a *nasta'liq* inscription on two lines. The style of the script suggests a *c.* eighteenth- to nineteenth-century date for the re-engraving.

عبد الله  
ابن مرتضى

‘Abdallāh b. Murtaḍā

15 × 11.5 × 2.5 mm  
1880–3563. Masson collection from Begram, Afghanistan (Callieri 1997: 47, cat. 1.10)

365



Jasper, red. Flat top and base with bevelled sides. Roman seal, *c.* second century AD, engraved with the figure of a hunter. The other side is engraved in *nasta'liq* script on three lines. The style of the script suggests a *c.* eighteenth- to nineteenth-century date for the re-engraving.

عبد الله  
محمد زمان

Lines 1–3: ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad Zamān  
The servant of God.

15 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 305. Christy collection

366



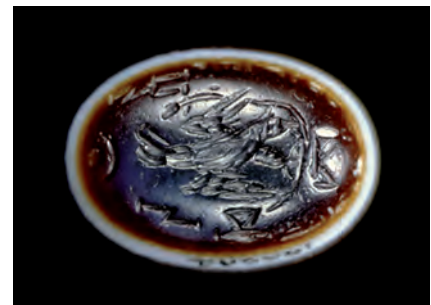
Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with flat base. Roman seal, *c.* second to third century AD. Two helmeted figures, each carrying a spear, face each other and clasp hands. Parallels may be drawn with the same motif on Roman coins, where the clasped hands are symbols of soldierly virtues. This type was struck all over the Roman empire (Carson, Sutherland and Bruun 1966, vol. 7: 693, nos. 85ff., mint of Antioch). In the centre over the clasped hands is an inscription in angular script with forked terminals. The style of the script suggests a *c.* ninth- to tenth-century date for the re-engraving.

الحسن بن جعفر

Al-Ḥasan b. Ja‘far

12 × 9 × 3.5 mm  
1930 10–14 1

367



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval cabochon with bevelled sides. South Arabian seal of about the third to sixth century AD (Pickworth 1998: 108ff.). In the centre is an eagle grasping in its talons the tail of a serpent. In epigraphic South Arabian are letters making up the name Nadīm. Around the edge of the seal is an Arabic inscription in angular script. Walker debated whether the South Arabian and the Arabic inscriptions were contemporaneous, as the



South Arabian script was known in early Islamic times, but thought it unlikely. He suggested that the Arabic inscription was added in the eighth century or perhaps earlier as a 'prophylactic to its owner'. This he thought might account for the change in the Qur'ānic phrase from 'keep us' to 'keep me' (Walker 1962: 456). The Sabeian script was one of a number of 'magical' scripts listed by the mysterious Ibn Waḥshīya (Matton 1977: 238).

سبحانك رب قني عذاب النار

South Arabian: Nadīm

Arabic: Glory to You O Lord, keep me from the punishment of the fire

This is based on Qur'ān 3:191: 'Glory to You; keep us from the penalty of the fire.'

17 × 12 × 6 mm

1854 4–1 23. Acquired by Felix Jones in Iraq (Walker 1962 – includes all previous publications; Porter 1997: 179)

368



Carnelian, orange. Convex top and hollowed base. One line of angular script above a lion and a star below. This is likely to be an ancient seal re-cut with the Qur'ānic inscription in the early Islamic period (c. eighth to ninth century), both on account of its dome-like shape and the form of the lion. A Sasanian seal with a lion couchant to right with a star below (as here) and a crescent above is published in Bivar 1969: 69, cat. no. DA 6. Other examples, c. fourth to sixth century with Pahlavi inscriptions, offer parallels in the style of the engraving.

لكل اجل كتاب

For each period is a book revealed

The text is from Qur'ān 13:38. Another example of this inscription is engraved on Cat. 273.

12 × 10 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 149. Christy collection

369



Carnelian, pale orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides. On one side are two sketchily drawn figures, probably monkeys. On the other, it is inscribed in *nasta'liq* script with a scroll background. A single line is around the edge of the seal. This is very likely to be a Sasanian seal which has been re-engraved in the Islamic period. Similarly drawn monkeys appear on fifth- to sixth-century Sasanian seals (Bivar 1969: 96, cat. nos. GA 2–4). The style of the *nasta'liq* suggests that the seal was re-engraved c. eighteenth to nineteenth century.

Side B

محمد بك

Side B: Muḥammad Beg

13 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 249. Christy collection

370



Rock crystal. Rectangular cabochon with rounded ends and flat base engraved on both sides. On side A are alternating lines of Pahlavi and Persian scripts, a star below the second line. The Persian is in an angular-cursive style. On side B is another inscription in angular style but crudely inscribed. The Pahlavi and Persian inscriptions are likely to have been engraved at the same time. The concurrent use of both these scripts is found extensively on Arab-Sasanian coins in the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods (Walker 1941: 1ff.).

Side A

بهرام بن سعيد بن بهرام  
بهرام بن سعيد بن بهرام

Side B

or

ابو احمد (?)

حمدن

Side A: Pahlavi above and below the Persian name Bahrām b. Sa'īd b. Bahrām

Side B: Abū Aḥmad [?] or Ḥamdān (with the *alif* omitted)

The Pahlavi script could possibly read 'good fortune' (*farrokha*) and 'pure' (*p'kyck*), although it is erroneously spelt. Another option is that it refers to the title of the rank of officer, although this would also be misspelt if that were the case. The Arabic is sketchily written and unclear. After the Abū is an extra *alif*. A possible alternative is Abū'l Qadir.<sup>1</sup>

20 × 12 × 6 mm

1880–3639. Masson collection, no. 5



## Seals with Arabic inscriptions engraved on both sides

371



Carnelian, orange-brown. Oval cabochon, engraved on both sides. On the convex side (A) in angular script with wedge and foliate terminals. 'Īsā on the second line is underlined by the return of the *yā'*. Stars are above and below the inscription. The inscription on the flat side (B) is engraved in angular-cursive script.

Side A

باسم هاشم  
بن با عيسى

Side B

بن محمد  
احمد بن محمد بن احمد  
بن زيد

Side A, lines 1–2: In the name Hāshim (?) [...] b. Bā 'Īsā

This reading is uncertain. Hāshim has the *alif* omitted. If the second word on the second line is the letter *bā'*, it might suggest that the owner is of Ḥaḍramī origin as this is a common way of constructing names in that region of Yemen (for another example see **Cat. 194**).

Side B, lines 1–3: Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Zayd

The three circles are presumed to be decorative unless the one on the third line is read as the letter *mīm*. They could also be earlier.

14 × 12 × 8 mm  
1893 4–26 167. Franks collection. Acquisition register note that it came from India

372



Carnelian, dark orange-brown. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides, damaged at the corners. Inscriptions in angular script with forked and foliate terminals are carved on both sides in different hands. Side A was carved first then cut down.

Side A

الا بالله  
احمد بن اسد [ق]  
ما توفيقى

Side B  
Centre

Margin

قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد  
ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Side A, lines 3 and 1: There is no success for me except in God

Line 2: [A]ḥmad b. Ish[āq]

The *alif* of Ishāq is omitted. Although cut down, the section 'there is no success' can be discerned from the tops of the letters.

Side B

Centre: Hājī b. Muḥammad

Margin: 'Say he is God, the one and only God, the eternal absolute. He begets not nor is he begotten and there is none like unto him' (Qur'ān 112).

11 × 8 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 184. Christy collection

373



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides chipped at the corners. Carved on both sides in angular script on one side and angular cursive script on two lines on the other. The side with the angular inscription evidently pre-dates the other.

Side A  
Centre

محمد

Side B

محمد بن احمد  
بو بكر شاه

Side A: Muḥammad

Side B, lines 1–2: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad [A]bū Bakr Shāh (?)

Little that is legible remains of the marginal inscription on side A. There may be parallels with seal **Cat. 346**, which, similarly, has a centrally positioned Muḥammad but with the Twelve Imams around it. On side B, the last part of the name is unclear and may be Shāh with one of the teeth of the letter *shīn* omitted.

12 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 183. Christy collection

374



Carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on one side in undecipherable angular script with foliate terminals and with a *nasta'liq* inscription on the other.

Side B

ادرکني علی اکبر

Side B: Reach me 'Alī Akbar

The owner's name is 'Alī Akbar, but this is also an allusion to the son of Imām Ḥusayn, who was martyred at Kerbela in AD 680.

15 × 13 × 4 mm  
1921 2–20 26

375



Carnelian, orange. Partially whitened, probably as a result of burial. Engraved on both sides in *nasta'liq* script in Arabic and Persian with floral scroll backgrounds.

Side A

محمود بنده آل محمد

Side B

عبده محمد بن [?]

Side A, Persian: Maḥmūd is the servant of the family of Muḥammad

Side B, Arabic: His servant Muḥammad b. [?]

14 × 11.5 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 275. Christy collection

Impression of Cat. 375



#### Note

- 1 I am grateful to Shahrokh Razmjou for this reading.

## 6. Seals c. fourteenth century and later

This chapter consists of seals that are inscribed in a variety of cursive scripts. It corresponds to Kalus 1981: 32–50; Kalus 1986: 11–41; Content 1987: 294–312. The seals are grouped together according to style or type of inscription. The dating of this group and the content are discussed in the Introduction, p. 17f.

The Arabic transcription attempts to show how the inscription is arranged on the seal; however, this is not always possible, particularly when words are split up. These are then transcribed as continuous lines.

### Seals with personal names and benedictory inscriptions or names of the Fourteen Immaculates (Table 6, p. 135)

376



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, damaged at the top. The cursive inscription is symmetrically arranged around a central square created by the return of the letter *yā* in each section. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

Centre

عبد الله  
الهادي  
عيسى  
حاجي

Compartments

محمد المصطفى وعلي المرتضى/علي  
الله في كل الامور توكلني/وبالخمسة  
اصحاب العباد توسلني/وعلى محمد كل  
دعا املي

Centre, lines 1–4: ‘Abdallāh / al-Hādī / ‘Īsā / Ḥājī

In the compartments starting on the right (reading anticlockwise): Muḥammad the Chosen, ‘Alī the Accepted/ my reliance is on God in all things/ and to the five friends

is my fervent plea/ and in honour of (lit. on) Muḥammad all the prayers that I hope for

The readings in the third and fourth compartments are tentative.

The central inscription can be read starting from the bottom line: Ḥājī (indicating that he has been on the Ḥajj) ‘Īsā al-Hādī is the servant of God (*‘abd Allāh*). However, his name could also be ‘Abdallāh. The *khamṣ aṣḥāb*, the five companions or friends, are Muḥammad and ‘Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn and Fāṭima. A related verse is found in glazed brick in the *madrasa* of Imām Ja‘far al-Šādiq in Isfahan (Ghouchani 1985: fig. 143).

19 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 232. Christy collection

377



Lapis lazuli, blue. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription is symmetrically arranged around a central square which is formed out of the four returns of the letter *yā* of ‘Alī.

Centre

علي  
عبد

Compartments

محمد حسن علي / موسى جعفر علي /  
محمد حسين علي / محمد حسن علي

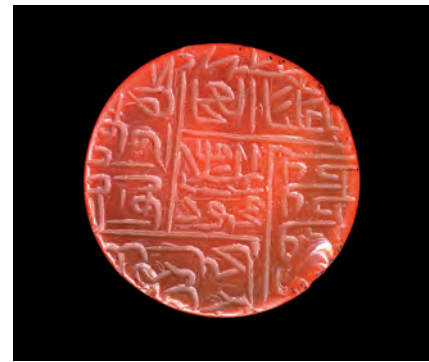
Centre: His servant ‘Alī

In the compartments starting at the top, (reading anticlockwise), the Twelve Imams: Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Alī/ Mūsā Ja‘far ‘Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn ‘Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan ‘Alī

A similar seal is in Kalus 1981: 43, no. 2.2.14.

19 × 17.5 × 2.5 mm  
1880–3638. Masson collection, no. 4

378



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and convex base with bevelled sides cut down. Damaged in places. The cursive inscription is symmetrically arranged around a central square.

Centre

عبد السلام  
محمود

Compartments

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب / تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب / [ك]لهم و [غ]م  
سينجلي / بولايتك يا علي يا علي

Centre: Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Salām

In the compartments: Call upon ‘Alī manifest of miracles, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O ‘Alī, O ‘Alī, O ‘Alī

For a similar seal with owner’s name and invocation to ‘Alī, see Content 1987: 307, no. 74. Kalus 1981: 44, nos. 2.2.15–16. For a discussion of this invocation, see Cat. 337.

20 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 230. Christy collection

379



Carnelian. Round, flat top and flat base with bevelled sides, hollowed central section in the base. Cursive inscription.

العبد الواثق بالملك المعبود مظهر الدين  
مسعود

The slave who believes in the king who is worshipped Muḥammad al-Dīn Mas‘ūd



A seal in the Hermitage dated 906/1500–1 is very similar (Ivanov 1995: 147).

20 × 18 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14265

380



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, chipped on the sides. The cursive inscription is symmetrically arranged around a central square which is formed out of the four returns of the letter *yā* of 'Alī. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

Centre

الأحد

Compartments

محمد حسن علي / محمد حسين علي /  
محمد حسن علي / موسى جعفر علي

Centre: The One

This is one of the 'Names of God'.

In the compartments the Twelve Imams: Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Mūsā Ja'far 'Alī

19 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 231. Christy collection

381



Chalcedony, pale purple. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription, which has dots, is symmetrically arranged around a central square and is enclosed within a round frame of double lines. Knot motif above the *jīm* of *sayanjālī*.

Centre

إلا بالله  
وما توفيقي

Compartments

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب / تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب / كل هم و غم  
سينجلي / بولايتك يا علي يا علي

Centre: My success can only come through God (Qur'ān 11: 88)

In compartments: Call upon 'Alī, manifest of miracles, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

For other examples of this phrase on seals and amulets see Cat. 337 and A75ff. Similar seal inscriptions are in Kalus 1981: 36, no. I.2.1.4 and 43, no. I.2.2.14.

25 × 4.5 mm  
1880–3656. Masson collection, no. 21

382



Carnelian, dark orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription is symmetrically arranged around a central square left blank. There are dotted ornaments in the corners and stars in two places. Single line around the edge of the seal.

Outer margin

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب / تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب / كل هم و غم  
سينجلي / بولايتك يا علي يا علي

Inner margin

توكلت على الله

Outer margin: Call upon 'Alī manifest of miracles, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

Inner margin: I have put my reliance in God

For other phrases with *tawakkal* see Cat. 189ff.

30 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 229. Christy collection

383



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved around a square, the centre of which is left blank, are the names of the Twelve Imams. The surface is worn.

محمد حسن علي / محمد حسين علي /  
جعفر موسى علي / محمد حسن علي

Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī/ Ja'far Mūsā 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī

16.5 × 16.5 × 3.5  
OA+ 14267

384



Chalcedony, pale blue. Round, flat with bevelled sides. Symmetrically arranged cursive mirror inscription with ornamental knot patterns. Single line around the edge of the seal.

توكلي على خالقي

My trust is in my creator

The phrase is based on the phrase *tawakkaltu 'alā Allāh*, found in a number of places in the Qur'ān, such as Qur'ān 11: 56. A close parallel to this seal is in Content 1987: 322.

19 × 6 mm  
OA+ 14299

385



Nephrite. Round, flat top and base. The inscription in mirror writing, with *yā* 'Alī in the central interstices, forms a star with a knot pattern in the centre.

توكلي على خالقي  
يا علي

My trust is in my creator  
O 'Alī

21 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14258

386



Bloodstone, blue green with red flecks. Round, flat top and base. The inscription in mirror writing, with *yā* 'Alī in the central interstices, forms a star with a knot pattern in the centre.

توكلي على خالقي  
يا علي

My trust is in my creator  
O 'Alī

23 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14259

387



Nephrite, pale green. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed in compartments in a circle with the names of the Twelve Imams, a central knot motif in the centre.

محمد حسن علي / محمد حسين علي /  
جعفر موسى علي / محمد حسن علي

Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī/ Ja'far Mūsā 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī

19 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14285

388



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in four compartments. Muḥammad in each section with the *'aṙyns* of 'Alī radiating from the centre. A line around the edge of the seal.

محمد علي

Muḥammad, 'Alī

16 × 3.7 mm  
1878 12–20 233. Christy collection

389



Carnelian. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in four compartments. The Twelve Imams with the *'aṙyns* of 'Alī radiating from the centre.

محمد حسن علي / محمد حسين علي /  
جعفر موسى علي / محمد حسن علي

Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī/ Ja'far Mūsā 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī

21.5 × 21 × 6 mm  
OA+ 14266

390



Jade simulant, saussurite, green. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved with a knot pattern in the centre. The Twelve Imams in four compartments, which are created by the *lām* of 'Alī.

محمد حسن علي / محمد حسين علي /  
موسى جعفر علي / محمد حسن علي

Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī/ Mūsā Ja'far 'Alī/ Muḥammad Ḥasan 'Alī

19 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14256

391



Carnelian, orange. Round, flattish top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. The cursive inscription is divided into two sections by the return of the *yā'* of 'Alī. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله محمد علي  
العبد علي

Line 1: God, Muḥammad, 'Alī  
Line 2: The servant 'Alī

18 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 238. Christy collection

392



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged in places on one side. Cursive inscription, single line around the edge of the seal.

الله يقدر والعبد يدبر

Lines 1–4: God disposes and the servant proposes

13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 248. Christy collection

393



Bloodstone ring with red flecks. Oval with flat top, carved from one piece. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription, double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله يقدر والعبد يدبر

Lines 1–3: God disposes, and the servant proposes

Overall width of ring: 27 mm  
Engraved surface: 20 × 21 mm  
1872 6–4 973. Castellani collection

394



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription on three lines with V-shaped ornaments and *shadda* above Allāh. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله  
محمد  
علي

Line 1: Allāh  
Line 2: Muḥammad  
Line 3: 'Alī

16 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 237. Christy collection

395



Carnelian, orange. Hexagonal, flat top with bevelled sides. The base is bevelled down towards a flat centre. The cursive inscription on three lines has V-shaped ornaments. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله  
محمد  
علي

Line 1: Allāh  
Line 2: Muḥammad  
Line 3: 'Alī

15 × 14 × 5.5 mm  
1878 12–20 282. Christy collection

396



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base, damaged in places. The cursive inscription tending towards *nasta'liq* on three lines has diacritical marks and there are various dots and crosses in the background. A line around the edge of the seal.

نبي الله  
محمد  
علي ولي الله

Lines 1–3: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God 'Alī is the friend of God

16 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 241. Christy collection



397



Carnelian, orange. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *alifmaqṣūra* of 'alā. A line around the edge of the seal.

الله على  
توكلت

Lines 1–2: I have placed my trust in God

15 × 14 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 259. Christy collection

398



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *alifmaqṣūra* of 'alā. A knot motif is above the *tā* of *tawakkaltu*. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله على  
توكلت

Lines 1–2: I have placed my trust in God

14 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 235. Christy collection

399



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription on three lines. Double lines around the edge.

توكلت على الله

Lines 1–3: I have placed my trust in God

16 × 3.2 mm  
1878 12–20 244. Christy collection

400



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *alifmaqṣūra* of 'alā; V-shaped and other ornaments in the background. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

على الله  
التوفيق

Lines 1–2: Trust belongs to God

18.5 × 4.2 mm  
1878 12–20 243. Christy collection

401



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription in two sections, central band left blank. Double lines around the edge.

يا علي اتكالي

Lines 1–2: O 'Alī with myself in you is my trust

This reading is tentative.

18.5 × 4.2 mm  
1878 12–20 234. Christy collection

402



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Angular cursive inscription on three lines. Line around the edge of the seal.

العزت لله

Lines 1–3: Glory belongs to God

Normally 'izza would be written with a *tā* 'marbuṭa.

16 × 4 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 279. Christy collection

403



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Angular cursive inscription on three lines.

العزت لله

Lines 1–3: Glory belongs to God

Normally 'izza would be written with a *tā'* *marbuṭa*.

11 × 11 × 3.2 mm  
1878 12–20 260. Christy collection

404



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, a cross above the *yā'*. Single line around the edge of the seal.

علي

'Alī

This could be either someone's name or an invocation to the Caliph 'Alī, or both.

16 × 11 × 5 mm  
1866 12–29 128. Duc de Blacas collection

405



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on three lines with a double line around the edge of the seal.

نعم (؟)

هو حي لا يموت

Lines 1–3: He is alive and does not die

This phrase may be based on the Qur'ānic verse 'and put your trust in him who lives and does not die' (Qur'ān 25:58). There is a word at the top, possibly *na'ima*, 'how wonderful'.

14 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 247. Christy collection

406



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on three lines, double lines around the edge of the seal.

محمد نبي الله  
علي ولي الله

Lines 1–3: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the friend of God

The *lām* of *walī* is doubling up as the *alif* of *Allāh*.

18 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 127. Duc de Blacas collection

407



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon with high straight sides. One line of cursive *nasta'liq* script.

محمد نبي الله  
علي ولي الله

Muḥammad is the Prophet of God and 'Alī is the friend of God

10 × 7 × 3.5 mm  
1853 3–28 31. Auckland collection

408



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with elongated hastae. Single line around the edge of the seal.

يا كافي المهمات

O sufficient in difficulties

This is the second part of the phrase which begins *yā qādī al-hājāt* ('O Lord of (all) matters'), in reference to God.

13 × 11 × 44 mm  
1878 12–20 258. Christy collection

409



Chalcedony, pale yellow. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the *bā'* of *al-dhunūb* with scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal.

يا غفار  
الذنوب

Lines 1–2: O forgiver of sins

11 × 12 × 4.8 mm  
1878 12–20 300. Christy collection

410



Nephrite, pale grey. Rectangular with angled corners, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal.

الملك لله

The kingdom belongs to God

For other examples of this phrase inscribed in angular scripts see **Cat. 289ff.**

19 × 11 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 299. Christy collection

411



Chalcedony, grey and black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Inscription in *nasta'liq* on three lines with background of scrolls. The second *mīm* of Muḥammad is extended. Single line around the edge.

لا اله الا الله

محمد

رسول الله علي ولي الله

Lines 1–3: There is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the friend of God

20 × 12 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 274. Christy collection

412



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval cabochon with straight sides. Inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of scrolls. The *ḥā'* of Muḥammad is extended. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

لا اله الا الله

محمد

رسول الله

Line 1–3) There is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is His Prophet

The *shahāda*.

22 × 12 × 4.5 mm

1866 12–29 86. Duc de Blacas collection. (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 88–9, no. 33)

413



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat, set in a metal mount. Inscription in *nasta'liq* with a scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

ادركني يا امام حسين

Reach me, O Imām Husayn

15 × 13 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 21. Christy collection

414



Carnelian, orange-brown. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on five lines, double lines around the edge of the seal.

بفضايل الرسل الكرام  
سهل حسن المصطفى الختام

By the goodness of the generous prophets, the Chosen One has provided the best end

'The Chosen One' is one of the epithets of the Prophet Muḥammad.

15 × 14 × 4 mm

1866 12–29 83. Duc de Blacas collection. (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 38, no. 14)

415



Carnelian, orange. Oval cabochon engraved on the flat side with four lines of cursive script divided into two sections by the return of the *yā'* of *walī*. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

الله ولي التوفيق  
الفقيه عبد الرحمن

1. God is the friend of success

2. The poor man 'Abd al-Rahman

The *alif* of *rahmān* is omitted. The *alif* of *ilā* and Allāh double up.

15 × 12 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 276. Christy collection

416



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in several places. The cursive inscription is on four lines. Single line around the edge of the seal.

الواثق بالملك الوارث عبده نصر الله بن  
الحارث

The one who trusts the king who inherits (all), his servant Naṣrallāh b. al-Ḥārith

Naṣrallāh, 'the victory of God', is one of a number of compound names with Allāh, see 'Names' in the Introduction.

17 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 240. Christy collection

417



Goethite, dark brown. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in Arabic and Persian in four sections with a background of scrolls and dashes.

Centre

بنده طيبه

Top

يا واهب العطايا / اغفر لي الخطايا /  
نجني مما اخاف / ياخفي الالطاف



Centre square: His servant (in Persian)  
Ṭayyiba

Top and sides (in Arabic): O giver of graces,  
forgive me my sins, rescue me from what I  
fear, O receiver of bounties

21 × 19 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 108. (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 281–2,  
no. 120)

418



Ironstone, dark brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription enclosed within a rectangular cartouche with a border of cross motifs. It is divided into two sections by the return of the *yā'* of *azalī*.

بنده ازلي  
علي بن ولي

The servant of all time, 'Alī b. Walī

19 × 15 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14303

419



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. Cursive inscription in Persian in three sections, the central line within a cartouche.

[...]  
العبد اسمعيل فوج  
[...]

Lines 1 and 3: (unclear)

Line 2: The servant Ismā'īl Fawj

Fawj may be the owner's name; it also means group or battalion.

17 × 14 × 3.8 mm  
1878 12–20 283. Christy collection

420



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides, cut down. Cursive inscription in *naskh*.

لا اله الا الله محمد ر [سول]  
الله  
عبد خليل الله

There is no god but Allāh, Muḥammad is his Prophet, his servant Khalīl Al[lāh]

The first part of the inscription is the *shahāda*.

10 × 7 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 257. Christy collection

421



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of dots and leaves. Three parallel lines are created from the returns of the three *yās*. Single line around the edge of the seal.

توكلي على خالقي  
عبد حسين

My trust is in my creator, his servant Ḥusayn

15 × 13 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14377

422



Carnelian, dark orange. Oval, flattish top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of sprigs and flowers.

توكلي على خالقي  
عبد حسن

My trust is in my creator, his servant Ḥasan

17 × 12 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 109. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 284, no. 122)

423



Carnelian, orange translucent. Octagonal, flat top with bevelled sides mounted in a ring. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is divided into three sections by the return of *yā'* of *ḥasbī* and the *alif maqṣūra* of *kafā*. It lies against a background of floral scrolls. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

حسبي الله  
وحده ووثقتي  
عبد محمد

God suffices me, (He) alone and my belief, His servant Muḥammad

16 × 14 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 82. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 37, no. 13)

## Seals with names alone

424



Jasper, dark green. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. A single word in cursive script is surrounded by elegant floral scrolls.

أحمد

Aḥmad

15 × 11 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 308. Christy collection

425



Bloodstone, dark green and yellow flecks. Octagonal, flat top and slightly convex base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription enclosed within a cartouche formed out of the extension of the letter 'ayn' into a loop. At the top is a knot motif. Line around the edge of the seal.

عبدہ حیدر

His servant Ḥaydar

Ḥaydar, like Shīr (Cat. 428) is one of a number of words for lion in Persian. It is also one of the names of 'Alī and thus particularly favoured by the Shī'a (Steingass 1982: 435; Schimmel 1989: 2).

10 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 125. Duc de Blacas collection

426



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. A single word in cursive script surrounded by elegant floral scrolls.

زینب

Zaynab

This is one of the very few seals made for women in the collection. See also Cat. 141.

19 × 21 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 104. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 227, no. 95)

427



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in a cartouche at the base of the seal. This is engraved over a design of scrolls and flowers that also decorate the upper part of the seal.

حسن علي

Ḥasan, 'Alī

15 × 11 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 286. Christy collection

428



Chalcedony, white. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* against a background of crosses and dashes. Line around the interior edge of the seal.

عبدہ شیرعلي

His servant Shīr 'Alī

Shīr in Persian means 'lion'. The caliph 'Alī is known as the 'lion of God'; names using 'lion' are frequently associated with him and are popular among the Shī'a (Schimmel 1989: 34).

11 × 9.5 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 302. Christy collection

429



Chalcedony, white. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

عبدہ میرزا محمد

His servant Muḥammad Mirzā

The Persian word *mīrzā* denotes 'prince', 'gentleman', 'writer' or 'scribe', but also developed into a regular family name. It was used among the Turko-Persian aristocracy (Steingass 1982: 1361; Schimmel 1989: 56).

13 × 13 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 301. Christy collection



430



Chalcedony, yellow. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of crosses and dashes. Line around the edge of the seal.

محمد

Muḥammad

9 × 9 × 2 mm

1866 12–29 131. Duc de Blacas collection

431



Talc-chlorite rock, black and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with elaborate knot motif above.

موسی بن رضی

Mūsā b. Riḍā

21 × 15 × 5 mm

OA+ 14272

432



Haematite, black. Uneven shape. The surface is worn. Three lines of cursive script. The seal appears to have been cut down on the left, as the inscription is incomplete.

عبد[ه] شاه حسن[ن]

His servant Shāh Ḥa[san] (or Ḥusayn) (?)

11 × 9 × 4 mm

OA+ 14281

433



Carnelian, pale to dark orange. Pear-shaped, flat top and base with bevelled sides. It is engraved with a stag with the owner's name at the top.

حسن

Ḥasan

16 × 12 × 3 mm

OA+ 14274

### Seals inscribed in Persian

434



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, damaged in places. The Persian inscription on six lines is in cursive script (*naskh*). It is divided into two by a horizontal double band with central knot. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

هر که او نیک میکند یابد

نیک و بد هر چه میکند یابد

'Whoever does good or bad, whatsoever good or bad he does, in turn he receives'

Persian proverb cited in Dihkhuda 2006, vol. 1: 41, line 29, and vol. 2: 837, line 19.

17 × 5.5 mm

1866 12–29 107. Duc de Blacas collection.

(Reinaud 1928, vol. 2: 266–7, no. 112)

435



Carnelian, dark orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Cursive inscription in Persian. Crosses and dashes around the inscription. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

عاقبت بخیر باد

May the end be good

Another possible translation is: May you have a good reward for your work.

15 × 5 mm

1878 12–20 236. Christy collection

436



Sardonyx, pale brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides cut down. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lying against a floral scroll background; the Arabic inscription is within a central cartouche. An incomplete Persian inscription is around the margin.

Centre

وما توفیقي الا بالله

عبدہ مصطفی

قبلان

Margin

ای بار خدا بحق هستی

آسان و امان وتن درستی

Centre: My success can only come through God (Qur'ān 11: 88). His servant Muṣṭafā Qablān

Margin: O Lord by the truth of existence, ease, faith and bodily health

*Qablān* is Turkish for 'leopard' and is one of a number of animal names used in the Islamic world (Schimmel 1989: 2).

26 x 30 x 4 mm

Sloane amulet 19



437



Carnelian, dark orange carnelian. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of scrolls and dots.

غنچه گلزار عصمت عایشه

The bud of the rose garden of virtue, 'Ā'isha 'Ā'isha was the Prophet's youngest wife and is commonly used as a girl's name. The phrase 'rose of the rose garden' appears on a seal in the Ashmolean (Kalus 1986: 33, no. I.2.2.46). Each of the words inscribed here is a woman's name. The metre is *ramal*.

15 × 11 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14375

438



Limestone, black. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian within a decorative border.

خاك كف پاي محمد عبد الرحمن بيگ

The dust under the sole of the foot of Muhammad is 'Abd al-Raḥman

The *alif* of *al-Raḥman* is omitted. The owner's name could also be Muhammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān.

28 × 26 × 3.8 mm  
1893 4–26 174. Franks collection. (Register note: 'from India'.)

439



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of scrolls and dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

منتظر لطف الهي جابر

Jābir waiting for a favour from God

21 × 14 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 271. Christy collection

440



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top with bevelled sides set in a ring. Crudely written cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian divided into two sections by the *yā'* of *ilahī*. Single line around the edge of the seal.

مظهر [...] الهي خليل

The manifestation [...] of God, Khalīl

The phrase 'the manifestation of the kindness (*lutf*) or light (*nūr*) of God' is regularly found on seals (Kalus 1986: 26–7). Here there are only two letters visible after *maḡhar*, which could be an abbreviation of *nūr*.

15 × 13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 20. Christy collection

441



Chalcedony, yellow. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in sketchily written *nasta'liq* in Persian divided into two sections by the *yā'* of *ilahī* with dotted scroll background.

[...] الهي  
ميرزا محمود

[...] God, Mīrzā Maḥmūd

The first word is unclear. It could be *maḡhar* as Cat. 440, or *muntazir*, 'waiting for'.

15 × 13 × 3 mm  
OA+ 1337

442



Lapis lazuli, blue. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in Persian.

دوستي بامردم دانا نكوست  
دشمن دانا به از نادان دوست

Friendship with knowledgeable people is good; the enemy with knowledge is better than the friend without knowledge

These two lines are very popular in Persian poetry, and most famously appear in the works of Rūmī (d.1273). On the basis of the epigraphic style, this seal may be datable to the twelfth or thirteenth century, but it is included here with the other Persian inscriptions.

13 × 10 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14273

443



Carnelian. Round, flat top and base set in a brass ring. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with clusters of dots in the background. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

بنده شاه ولي غضنفر بن علي

The servant of the Holy One Ghazanfar b. 'Alī

Usually *bandeh shah-i wilāyat* in reference to Imām 'Alī, but probably written in this way to rhyme with 'Alī.

20 × 5 mm

Sl. B. 265 Sloane collection [23]

444



Carnelian, dark orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Carelessly written cursive inscription in Persian.

غلام علي [...]

The servant 'Alī

The rest is unclear.

15 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 245. Christy collection

445



Carnelian, dark orange brown to pale. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed in *nasta'liq* against a background

of spiralling scrolls and rosettes. Divided into two sections by the return of the *ya'* of *ilahī*.

بر آور الهي  
مراد حسن

God receive favourably Murād Ḥasan

For other examples of the phrase *barāwar ilahī* see Kalus 1986: 28–9.

10 × 11 × 3 mm

OA+14264

446



Carnelian, dark orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, the letters extending upwards.

حاج احمد بن حسين  
يابد اريد ز اقبال الملك

Iqbāl al-Mulk (?) remember Ḥājj Aḥmad b. Ḥusayn

18.5 × 17 × 4 mm

OA+ 14239

447



Brass, round, flat top and base with straight sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in the form of a *tughra*. Dentillated frame.

المذنب عبد المجيد

The sinner 'Abd al-Majīd

For brass dated seals, see **Chapter 7**.

14 × 14 × 1 mm

1992 1–28 10. Wilkinson collection

448



Brass, oval flat top and base with straight sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of floral scrolls.

بيگم ميرزا بنت عبد الكريم

Begum Mīrzā bint 'Abd al-Karīm

16 × 12 × 4 mm

1992 1–28 35. Wilkinson collection

449



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Traces of a mount. Inside the oval, the seal is carved into the shape of a *boteh*, a design frequently found on Indian textiles, particularly Kashmir shawls. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* has clusters of dots in the background.

افا ميرزا [...]

Agā Mīrzā [...]

The rest of the phrase is unclear.

14 × 20 × 3 mm

1992 1–28 24. Wilkinson collection



## 7. Dated seals

The dated seals are catalogued in two sections. The first group (Cat. 450–522) are stones dated between 986/1578–9 and 1345/1926–7. The second group (Cat. 523–559) are seals made of brass dated between 1195/1780–1 and 1347/1928–9. At the end of each of the groups are seals which only have three numerals. Inscriptions are in Arabic unless noted as being in Persian. A number of the Persian verse inscriptions are in metre. I am grateful to Alexander Morton who pointed these out to me.

### Stone dated seals

450



Carnelian, dark orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian in three sections. Floral scroll background. The central section is within a cartouche. Dated 986/1578–9. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

Centre

بنده شاه ولایت قور حسن سلطان

Top

الهی تو آن کن که پایان کار

Below

تو خوشنود باشی و ما رستگار ۹۸۶

Central section: The servant of the king of holiness (or sanctity) Qūr Ḥasan Sulṭān

Upper and lower section: O God You make it so that at the end of our work You are pleased and our sins are redeemed 986

The phrase 'the king of holiness' is a reference to Imām 'Alī.

The phrase above and below the central inscription is part of an anonymous poem. It appears with a different beginning in square Kufic in glazed brick in the Madrasa Imāmī in Isfahan built in 1325 (Ghouchani 1985: 134; Hillenbrand 1994: 178).

28 × 3.5 mm

1889 7–6 76. Acquired by Sydney Churchill in Iran in 1886

451



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the *yā'* of *qādī*. It is enclosed within a border of cross motifs. Dated 1071/1660–1.

قاضی عبد اللطیف بن ملا محمد سعید  
۱۰۷۱

Lines 1–2: Qādī 'Abd al-Laṭīf bin Mullā Muḥammad Sa'īd 1071

30 × 20 × 9 mm

1866 12–29 103. Duc de Blacas collection. (Reinaud 1828 vol. 2: 209, no. 1)

452



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with a background of floral scrolls. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1071/1660 at the top. Below the inscription there are further numerals 1030 and other dots. Possibly a date 1030/1620.

سید حاجی محمد [...]

یار ۱۰۷۱ ۱۰۳۰

Line 1–3: Sayyid Ḥajjī Muḥammad 1071 1030

The top line is unclear.

22 × 16 × 3 mm

OA+ 14378

453



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1074/1663–4.

عزیز بیگ دارد بدل مهر علی ۱۰۷۴

'Azīz Beg has in his heart the love of 'Alī 1074

The numeral 0 is represented by +.

19 × 12.5 × 4 mm

OA+ 14262

454



Plasma. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved in *nasta'liq* script with a background of spiralling scrolls and clusters of dots. Dated 1103/1691–2.

خاک پای فخر عالم مصطفی ۱۱۰۳

Fakhr-i 'Ālam is the dust on the feet of Muṣṭafā 1103

Muṣṭafā, meaning 'pure', is an epithet of the Prophet Muḥammad. This is ambiguous as the owner of the seal could also be called Muṣṭafā. Fakhr-i 'Ālam means 'pride of the world'.

22 × 18 × 5 mm

OA+ 14305



455



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat, with eight lobed sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian divided into two sections by the extension of the *tā'* of *shifā'at* echoed by the return of the *yā'* of *Ṣāfi* on the second line. Dated 1105/1693–4.

محمد صفی دارد امید شفاعت ۱۱۰۵

Ṣāfi hopes for the intercession of Muḥammad 1105

The name of the owner of the seal could also be Muḥammad Ṣāfi.

19 × 19 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 280. Christy collection

456



Nephrite, dark green. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of cursive script with vegetal sprigs in the background. Dated 1132/1719–20.

محمد عابد ۱۱۳۲

Lines 1–2: Muḥammad 'Ābid (or 'Ābid Muḥammad) 1132

14 × 10 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 37

457



Carnelian, dark orange; slightly white in places, probably as a result of burial. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the return of the *yā'* of *ilā*. Background of floral scrolls. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1133/1720–1.

عبدہ محمد زمان افوض امری الی اللہ  
۱۱۳۳

Lines 1–2: I trust my cause to God. His servant Muḥammad Zamān 1133

The first line is from Qur'ān 40:44.

This is the name of a well-known Persian miniature painter *fl.* 1670s–80s. It is highly unlikely that this is his seal as he is thought to have been dead by about 1700 (Canby 1993: 112–4; Titley 1983: 123–4). For a seal in similar style see Lowry 1988: 395, no. 127.

16 × 12 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 253. Christy collection

458



Carnelian, dark orange-brown. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the returns of the letters *yā'* of *Ḥijāzī* and *al-Nimāzī* with floral scroll background. Dated 1136/1723–4.

الوائق بالنبی الحجازی  
بلال اغامهدی النمازی ۱۱۳۶

Lines 1–3: The one who is confident in the Prophet of the Ḥijāz. Bilāl Āghā Mahdī al-Nimāzī 1136

Reinaud (vol. 2, 1828: 133) suggests that there is an intended allusion to the Prophet's muezzin, who was called Bilāl and who was reputedly Abyssinian. 'Āghā' is a Persian title given to noblemen or, in some cases, eunuchs (Steingass 1982: 76).

22 × 18 × 9 mm  
1866 12–29 87. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 133, no. 58)

459



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian divided into two sections by the extension of the *fā'* of *sharaf*. This is echoed by the return of the *yā'* of 'Alī on the second line. The background consists of spiralling scrolls and dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1143/1729–30.

شرف یافت میرزا ز نام علی ۱۱۴۳

Lines 1–2: Mīrzā found his glory from the name of 'Alī 1143

21 × 18 × 8.5 mm  
1866 12–29 92. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 154–5, no. 68)

460



Jasper, dark green. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on three lines. Line around the edge of the inscription. Dated 1157/1744–5.

عبدہ مرعن بن حسن ۱۱۵۷

His servant Mur'an b. Ḥasan 1157

13.5 × 12 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14255

461



Nephrite jade. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian. Dated 1158.

حاتم دارد امید شفاعت ز محمد ۱۱۵۸

Hātam hopes for the intercession of Muḥammad 1158

The owner's name is probably Muḥammad Hātam. The metre is *ramal*.

13.5 × 12 × 4 mm  
1943 10–9 14

462



Jasper, dark green. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided by the extended Muḥammad in the centre. The background has sketchily drawn dashes and dots and a line runs around the edge of the seal. Dated 1163/1749–50.

عبد القادر بن خاطر ۱۱۶۳

‘Abd al-Qādir b. Khāṭir 1163

16 × 14 × 5 mm  
1866 12–29 126. Duc de Blacas collection

463



Lapis lazuli. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian is divided into two by the extension of the *nūn* of *bandeh*. Dated 1173/1759–60.

بنده آل محمد مصطفی ۱۱۷۳

The servant of the family of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā 1173

Muṣṭafā, ‘the Pure’, is one of the epithets of the Prophet. The owner's name may also be Muḥammad Muṣṭafā.

13 × 11 × 3 mm  
1985 7–13 46

464



Carnelian, pale orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in two lines. Single engraved line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1173/1759–60.

یا اکرم من کل کریم ۱۱۷۳

Lines 1–2: O more gracious than all the gracious 1173

This is a reference to God.

15 × 11 × 4.5 mm  
1878 12–20 284. Christy collection

465



Carnelian, dark orange-brown. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of sprigs. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1176/1762–3.

حبیب است خاکپای محمد ۱۱۷۶

Lines 1–3: Ḥabīb is the dust on the feet of Muḥammad 1176

The number seven lies on its side.

21 × 14 × 3.5 mm  
1893 4–26 169. Franks collection

466



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral background. Dated 1179/1765–6.

بود نور چشم محمد حسین سنه ۱۱۷۹

Ḥusayn is the light of the eye of Muḥammad 1179

The owner's name could also be Muḥammad Ḥusayn. The metre is *mutaqārib*.

26 × 20 × 9 mm  
1866 12–29 95. (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 174, no.76)

467



Carnelian, pale orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in an elegant composition, with a background of scrolls and dots. Line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1181/1767–8.

محمد حسن بن محمد رضی الحسینی ۱۱۸۱

Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Ḥusaynī 1181

While the owner's name is Muḥammad Riḍā, this also refers to the Prophet Muḥammad by his *laqab*, ‘*riḍā*’ (pleasing). The *nisba* al-Ḥusayni indicates that he is of the family of Imām Ḥusayn. For other examples of this composition, see **Cat. 515**.

15 × 12 × 2.8 mm  
1878 12–20 256. Christy collection



468



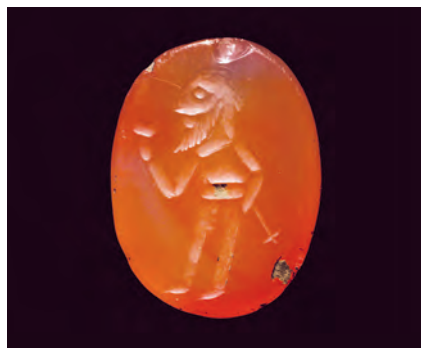
Carnelian, orange-brown. Round, flat top, carelessly cut with bevelled sides damaged in places. *Shadda* above the *mīm*. Line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1182/1768–9.

محمد ١١٨٢

Muhammad 1182

15 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 246. Christy collection

469



Carnelian, orange. Oval with slightly convex top and flat base. It is engraved on both sides. Side A has a cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background and is dated 1184/1867–8. On the other side (B) is a standing bearded figure holding a cup in his right hand and his left hand in his pocket. A weapon, possibly a mace, hangs from his belt. This is possibly a Sasanian seal that has been re-engraved.

عبدہ الراحي محمد صادق ١١٨٤

Side A: His servant, the supplicant  
Muhammad Sādiq 1184

25 × 17 × 6 mm  
1985 7–13 48 [141735]

470



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged. Engraved on both sides with *nasta'liq* inscriptions in Persian with scroll and dot backgrounds. Double lines around both sides the edge of the seal. Side A is dated 1185/1771–2.

Side A

لطف الله خاك قدم نبي ١١٨٥

Side B

حيدر علي غلام شاه ولي

Side A: Luṭfallāh is the dust on the feet of the Prophet 1185

Side B: Ḥaydar 'Alī is the servant of Shāh Walī

'Shāh Walī' is probably a reference to Imām 'Alī.

18 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 239. Christy collection

471



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides, damaged in places. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian, divided into two sections by the returns of the *yās* of *kalbī* and 'Alī. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1185/1171–2.

عبدہ درويش علي خاك پای کلبی ١١٨٥

The dust on the feet of ('Alī's) dog, his servant, the servant Darwīsh 'Alī 1185

14 × 13 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 94. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 159, no. 72)

472



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved in *nasta'liq* script divided into two sections by the *tā'* of *rahmat*. Dated 1206/1791.

برحمت بی نیازم کرد قیوم  
چو خان بابا بعون شاه معصوم  
١٢٠٦

Like Khān Bābā with the help of the Shāh without sin, the eternal God freed me of needing his mercy

*Shah-i ma'sūm* could refer to Imām 'Alī as 'the Shāh without sin', or alternatively could be a name, Shāh Ma'sūm. Bābā Khān was the name of Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (b. 1772), before he became ruler in 1797. This could be an allusion to him. The metre is *hazaj*.

23 × 23 × 5 mm  
1949 10–13 1

473



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, the upper part in the form of a *tughra*. Dated 1214/1799–1800.

الراجي الى الله محمد باقر ١٢١٤

The supplicant to God, Muḥammad Bāqir 1214

20 × 15 × 4.5 mm  
1989 3–13 1



474



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set into a silver mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with floral scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1215/1800–1.

عبدہ الراجی احمد ۱۲۱۵

His servant, the supplicant Aḥmad 1215

20 × 13 × 4 mm

1994 8–5 7. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

475



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lies against a floral scroll background and is enclosed within an engraved oval frame. Dated 1217/1802–3.

المتوکل علی اللہ عبدہ لطف اللہ ۱۲۱۷

The one who depends on God, his servant Luṭfallāh 1217

18 × 13 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 273. Christy collection

476



Carnelian, orange. Pear-shaped, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of floral scrolls. The name is written within the loop of the *hā'* of *ṣaḥḥ*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1225/1810–11.

صح نور الله ۱۲۲۵

Correct. Nūrallāh 1225

15 × 10 × 2.5 mm

1878 12–20 291. Christy collection

477



Chalcedony, white. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of loose dots and dashes. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1225/1810–11.

محراب منتظر لطف الہی ۱۲۲۵

The one who awaits the divine grace, Miḥrāb 1225

*Miḥrāb*, the niche in a mosque in the direction of Mecca towards which Muslims pray, is also attested as a name (Schimmel 1989: 41).

21 × 14 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 303. Christy collection

478



Carnelian, pale orange banded. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides set into a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* enclosed within engraved oval frame with floral scroll background. Line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1227/1812–13.

الوائق باللہ الغنی عبدہ قاجائی (؟) ۱۲۲۷

(Lines 1–3) The one who trusts in God the Independent One (al-Ghanī), His servant Qājā'ī (or Qājānī?) 1227

Al-Ghanī is one of the Names of God.

22 × 17 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 24. Christy collection

479



Carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with floral scroll background. A central lozenge with crossed lines is created out of the extensions of the letters. Dated 1228/1813.

فی جنات النعیم ۱۲۲۸

'In the gardens of bliss' 1228

This quotation is from Qur'ān 10:9.

For a similar decorative treatment see Content 1987: 301, no. 64.

14 × 10 × 2.8 mm

1893 4–26 170

480



Carnelian, dark orange. Pear-shaped, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of floral scrolls. The name is written within the loop of the *hā'* of *ṣaḥḥ*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1235/1819–20.

صح محمد علی ۱۲۳۵

Correct. Muḥammad 'Alī 1235

17 × 11 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 290. Christy collection

481



Carnelian, orange. Pear-shaped, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll and dash background. The name is written within the loop of the *ḥā'* of *ṣaḥḥ*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1236/1820–1.

صح هادي الحسيني ١٢٣٦

Correct. Hādī al-Ḥusaynī 1236

20 × 15 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 289. Christy collection

482



Carnelian, dark orange. Octagonal, flat top, set in a silver mount. Cursive inscription with background of stars and dots. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1238/1822–3.

محمد شريف ١٢٣٨

Muḥammad Sharīf 1238

15 × 12 × 4 mm  
1994 8–5 8. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

483



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with a background of

scrolls and dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1238/1822–3.

بنده بدل مهر نبی خدا مراد ١٢٣٨

Seal of the devoted slave of the Prophet of God, Murād 1238

Alternatively, the owner's name could be Khudā Murād.

20 × 15 × 5.2 mm  
1878 12–20 270. Christy collection

484



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *yā'* of *walī* and enclosed within an octagonal frame. Dated 1241/1825–6.

العبد المذنب ولي محمد ١٢٤١

The servant, the sinner, the friend of Muḥammad 1241

The owner's name could also be Muḥammad Walī.

14 × 12 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 285. Christy collection

485



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a ring. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian dated 1243/1827–8. Single line around the edge of the seal.

چو روز قیامت بلرزد جسد محمد بفریاد  
احمد رسد ١٢٤٣

When the body trembles on the day of resurrection Muḥammad will answer Aḥmad's cry for help 1243

The metre is *mutaqārib*.

16 × 13 × 6 mm  
1878 12–20 22. Christy collection

486



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, set in mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1247/1831–2.

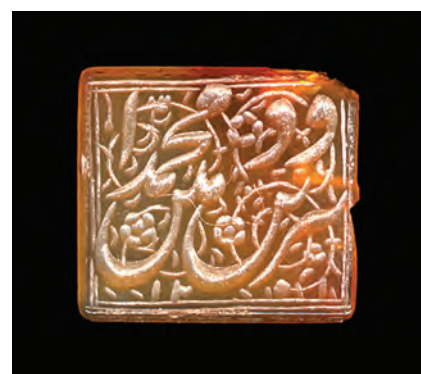
صل علی المصطفی ١٢٤٧

Bless the Chosen One

'Al-Muṣṭafā', 'the Chosen One', is one of the epithets of the Prophet Muḥammad. It could also be the name of the owner of the seal.

21 × 14 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 25. Christy collection

487



Carnelian, pale orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of scrolls and flowers. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1251/1790–1.

پیرو دین محمد امین ١٢٥١

Amīn is a follower of the religion of Muḥammad 1251

The owner's name could also be Muḥammad Amīn.

15 × 13 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 255. Christy collection



488



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides in cursive script in *nasta'liq* in Persian, one side dated 1251/1835–6.

Side A

عیسی پیرو دین محمد ۱۲۵۱

Side B

نوروز علي

Side A: 'Isā is a follower of the religion of Muḥammad 1251

Side B: Nawrūz 'Alī

Nawrūz is the Persian New Year's Day. The owner may have been born on that day.

20 × 12 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 272. Christy collection

489



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with floral scroll background. Double line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1252/1836–7.

ازجان و دل هستم غلام حسین ۱۲۵۲

In soul and heart, I am the slave of Ḥusayn 1252

The owner's name could be Ghulām Ḥusayn.

23 × 16 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 269. Christy collection

490



Goethite, dark brown. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* enclosed within a rectangular frame. Dated 1255/1839–40.

ابو القاسم بن حسن [ا]لموسوي ۱۲۵۵

Abū l Qāsim b. Ḥasan [a]l-Mūsawī 1255

The *nisba* al-Mūsawī indicates that he is descended from the family of Mūsā, the seventh Shī'ī imam.

9 × 9 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 294. Christy collection

491



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1256/1840–1.

ابراهيم بن رحيم ۱۲۵۶ (۴)

Ibrahīm b. Raḥīm 1256 (?)

18 × 13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 297. Christy collection

492



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top set in a silver mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1257/1841–2.

علي محمد ۱۲۵۷

'Alī Muḥammad 1257

17 × 12 × 3 mm

1994 8–5 14. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

493



Carnelian, dark orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian. It is divided into two sections by the *yā'* of *walī* with a background of floral scrolls. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1261/1845.

الهي بحق نبی ولی ببخشا گناه میرزا قلی  
۱۲۶۱

O God, by the truth of the guardian Prophet, forgive the sin (of) Mīrzā Qulī. 1261

The metre is close to *mutaqārib*.

17 × 15 × 4.2 mm  
1878 12–20 251. Christy collection

494



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a metal mount. It is engraved with the figure of a man with his back turned holding a falcon in his right hand and a ring in the left. Falconry was a popular pastime; the owner of the seal may have been a keen falconer. It is possible, however, that this is an ancient seal that has been re-engraved. Dated 1262/1845–6.

فرخ ۱۲۶۲  
۳۰۲۰

Farrukh 1262

There are further numerals next to the name: 3020

18 × 13 × 5 mm  
1861 6–28 31



495



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed in *nasta'liq* with background of stems and clusters of flowers. Dated 1262/1845–6.

[...] بطفيل فقير (?)  
١٢٦٢

The poor Ṭufail (?) 1262

The rest of the inscription is unclear.

16 × 12 × 3 mm  
1893 4–26 171

496



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides, one side in early angular script, the other in *nasta'liq* with a background of scrolls. Dated 1262/1845–6.

Side A

الحسن  
بن محمد

Side B

عبد الرّاجي بن (?) شير  
١٢٦٢

Side A, lines 1–2: al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad

Side B: His servant, the supplicant Ibn Shīr(?), 1262

A possibility for the name is Ibn Shīr; *shīr*, meaning 'lion', a popular Persian name and one of the names of 'Alī. It is usually found in a compound form such as 'Alī Shīr (see Cat. 428).

15.5 × 13 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 254. Christy collection

497



Glass, colourless. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. Figures of lion and sun at the top and *nasta'liq* inscription below. Dated 1262/1845–6.

افلاطون ١٢٦٢

Aflātūn 1262

This is the Arabic name for Plato.

18 × 3 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14275

498



Bloodstone. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on three lines in *nasta'liq*. Dated 1264/1847–8.

يا خفي الالطاف  
نجنّا مما نخاف  
ابراهيم بن محمد  
١٢٦٤

O You who are invisible in your kindness, save us from what we fear. Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad 1264

16.5 × 15 × 3 mm  
1936 3–19 2

499



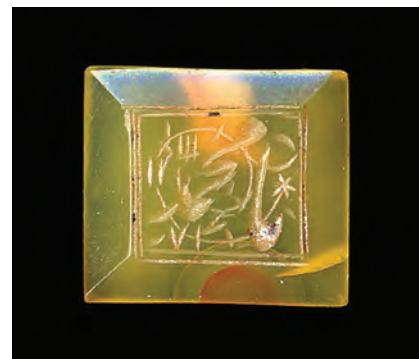
Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides enclosed within an oval frame. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1265/1448–9.

علي اكبر ابن كشي اقا ١٢٦٥

'Alī Akbar b. Kashī Agā 1265

19 × 15 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 304. Christy collection

500



Chalcedony, yellow. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background enclosed within a central frame. Dated 1274/1857–8.

يا محمد ١٢٧٤

O Muḥammad 1274

14 × 12.5 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 298. Christy collection

501



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of 'Alī. Dated 1278/1861–2.

صفدر علي ١٢٧٨

Şafdar 'Alī 1278

In addition to being the owner's name, this is probably a reference to the Caliph 'Alī. *Şafdar* has the meaning 'brave' or 'warlike'.

22 × 20 × 5 mm

1893 4–26 172. Franks collection

502



Glass, purple. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background enclosed within a marginal design of dashes. Dated 1281/1864–5.

دوست محمد ١٢٨١

Lines 1–2: Dūst Muḥammad 1281

*Dūst* means 'friend' in Persian, so the inscription expresses the notion 'friend of the Prophet Muḥammad'. A well-known Dūst Muḥammad is the Afghan ruler of that name (1234–80/1819–63).

15 × 11 × 3 mm

1893 4–26 173. Franks collection

503



Agate. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of floral scrolls. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1281/1864–5.

يا احسن المجاورة يا واسع المغفرة ١٢٨١

O You who are the best to have near and generous in forgiveness 1281

15 × 13 × 13 mm

1992 1–28 38. Wilkinson collection

504



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top set into a silver mount. It is engraved with a deer and an inscription in *nasta'liq*. Dated 1288/1871–2.

يا جواد ١٢٨٨

O Jawād 1288

*Jawād* means 'liberal' or 'openhanded'. Although it is in the form of an invocation, it is not one of the actual Names of God. It may refer to God and be the owner's name at the same time.

12.5 × 15 mm (bezel and mount);

overall length: 30 mm

1994 8–5 6. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

505



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with stars above. Dated 1308/1890–1.

عبد الرحمن ١٣٠٨

'Abd al-Raḥman 1308

16 × 12 × 5 mm

1994 8–5 17. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

506



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a silver mount. The inscription is in the form of a *tughra*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1317/1899–1900.

الراجي الى الله محمد مهدي ١٣١٧

The supplicant unto God, Muḥammad Mahdī 1317

19 × 13 mm (bezel and the mount);

overall length: 25 mm

1994 8–5 5. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

507



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1318/1900–1.

يا داود ١٣١٨

O Dā'ūd 1318

14 × 13 × 3 mm

1994 8–5 15. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran



508



Glass. Three-sided seal with brass mount engraved on one side with a cursive inscription. Stars at the top. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1345/1926–7.

امير اصلان ۱۳۴۵

Amīr Aslān 1345

14 × 13 × 11 mm  
1994 8–5 3. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

### Stone seals with only two or three numerals

509



Carnelian, pale orange. Rectangular with rounded corners, flat with bevelled sides set in a gilt copper ring. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Turkish, with a background of spiralling floral scrolls. It is divided into three sections by the *bā'* of *naṣīb* and the final *yā'* of *ṣiddīqī*. Single line around the edge of the seal. Numerals 92 under the inscription. (Possibly 992/1584–5.)

نصیب ابو بکره  
ایله خدايا  
صدق صديقي  
۹۲

O my God give the truth to Abū Bakr, my friend has paid homage to the truth 92

The owner of the seal is Abū Bakr, but reference is at the same time being made to the caliph Abū Bakr.

16 × 13 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 88. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 136, no. 59)

510



Carnelian, dark orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of scrolls and clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Numerals 99, top left.

عبدہ شرف الدين ۹۹

His servant Sharaf al-Dīn 99

The word *Sharaf* is split into two.

12 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 281. Christy collection

511



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of floral scrolls. Numerals 111; either [1]111/1699–1700 or 111[0].

نقش بر مهر دلم مهر علي است ۱۱۱

The love of 'Alī is engraved on the seal of my heart 111

The dot-like ornament after the final 1 could also be zero and thus 1110.

16 × 14 × 5 mm  
1866 12–29 93. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 155, no. 69)

512



Carnelian, orange. Round, flat top and base (chipped) with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the return of the letters *yā'* of 'Alī and Ḥusaynī. It lies against a sketchy scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Numerals 116; probably [1]116/1702–1703.

عبدہ مير علي الحسيني  
۱۱۶

Lines 1–3: His servant Mīr 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī 116

The use of *mīr* indicates that the owner is descended from the family of the Prophet, while the *nisba* al-Ḥusaynī specifies his lineage from Imām Ḥusayn.

16 × 3.5 mm  
1878 12–20 242. Christy collection

513



Carnelian, dark orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides with *nasta'liq* inscriptions. On Side A, the inscription lies against a scroll background and is divided into sections by the return of the *alif maqṣūra* of *ilā*. Numerals 119; probably [1]119/1707–8. On Side B the *nasta'liq* is elegantly written with no background.



Side A

افوض المري الى الله عبده صفر ١١٩

Side B

ادرکني يا محمد

Side A: I trust my cause to God, his servant Šafar. [1]119

Side B: Reach me O Muḥammad

The name Šafar, after the second month of the Muslim year, is sometimes given as a reminder to Shi'īs of the 40th day after the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn and the beginning of the Prophet Muḥammad's final illness (Schimmel 1989: 21–2). For the phrase 'Reach me, O Imām Ḥusayn', see **Cat. 413**.

17 × 13 × 3.8 mm  
1878 12–20 252. Christy collection

514



Rock crystal. Oval cabochon with bevelled sides, carved on the flat side. It is inscribed in *nasta'liq* in Persian with a background of dots and rosettes. Double line around the edge of the seal. Numerals 163; probably [1]163/1749–50.

چو روز قیامت بلرزد جسد  
محمد بفریاد قاسم رسد  
١٦٣

When the body trembles on the day of resurrection, Muḥammad will answer Qāsim's cry for help

24 × 18 × 12 mm  
1994 8–5 13. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

515



Carnelian, orange. Square with a flat top set into a silver mount. Cursive inscription overlaid with horizontal and vertical lines made from the extensions of some of the letters. At the top numerals 129 (presumably 1129/1716–17). Single line around the edge of the seal.

محمد علي بن محمود الطباطبائي  
١٢٩

Muḥammad 'Alī b. Maḥmūd al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī 129

The Ṭabāṭabā'ī are an important Sayyid family in Iran. For other seals with this family name see **Cat. 544** and **553**.

13 × 13 × 5 mm  
1992 1–28 39. Wilkinson collection

516



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides, on side A in cursive script in Persian and with numerals 178 (probably [1]178) and on side B with letters and numerals.

بنده رب جلی حسنعلی ١٧٨

Side A: The servant of mighty God, Ḥasan 'Alī 178

Side B: Four lines of numerals and letters (see Amulets, **Cat. A137ff**)

12 × 10 × 8 mm  
OA+ 14241

517



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides cut down. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lies against a background of floral scrolls. Dated 183; presumably [1]183/1769–70.

لطفعلی  
١٨٣

Luṭf'a[lī] 183

In Arabic this means 'the grace of 'Alī', a name used by the Shi'a as an expression of their devout feelings towards Imām 'Alī. (Schimmel 1989: 34).

13 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 277. Christy collection

518



Carnelian, orange. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, numerals 187, probably [1]187/1773–4.

يثق بربه العلي عبده حسين بن علي  
١٨٧

His servant Ḥusayn b. 'Alī believes in God on high 187

16 × 10 × 2 mm  
1880–3640. Masson collection 6

519



Carnelian, orange. Slightly oval, flat top and base with bevelled, uneven sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian. Single line around the edge of the seal. Numerals 211, probably [1]211/1796–7.

ابو بكرم محب چار يارم ۲۱۱

I am Abū Bakr and lover of the four companions 211

*Chār* is a contraction of *chahār* (four). The owner's name is Abū Bakr and he is associating himself with the Rightly Guided Caliphs, the first of whom was Abū Bakr (11–13/632–4). The metre is *hazaj*.

17 × 15 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 89. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 145, no. 63)

520



Serpentine, green. Rectangular flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script. Numerals 124, probably [1]124/1712–13.

عبدہ محمد علي ۱۲۴

His servant Muḥammad 'Alī 124

19 × 14 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 14257

521



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides, set in a metal mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with a background of scrolls. Numerals 113, probably [1]113/1701–2.

دارد اميد شفاعت محمد صادق ۱۱۳

Lines 1–3: Šādiq hopes for the intercession of Muḥammad 113

The owner's name could also be Muḥammad Šādiq.

20 × 12 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 26. Christy collection

522



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian divided into two by the extension of the *bā'* of *muḥib* with a background of spiralling scrolls and dots. Single line around the edge of the seal. Cursive inscription. Numerals 189, probably [1]189/1775–6.

محب خاندان آل احمد بود ازجان و دل  
علي محمد ۱۸۹

'Alī Muḥammad is attached heart and soul to the family and descendants of Aḥmad 189

Aḥmad in this case refers to the Prophet Muḥammad. The metre is *hazaj*.

15 × 12 × 3.5 mm  
1866 12–29 102. Duc de Blacas collection.  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 205, no. 88)

## Brass dated seals

523



Brass. Rectangular, flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides. Cursive inscriptions, the central one, which is deeply engraved, in *nasta'liq*. Dated 1195/1780–1.

Top and base

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل الله احد الله  
الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
۱۱۹۵

Centre

يا عباس علي

Top and base: Qur'ān 112 (*huwa* is omitted after *qul*) 1195

Centre: O 'Abbās 'Alī

19 × 17 × 1.5 mm  
1992 1–28 33. Wilkinson collection

524



Brass. Rectangular, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1218/1803–4.

المتوكل على الله عبده نور محمد ۱۲۱۸

The one who is reliant on God. His servant Nūr Muḥammad 1218

His name means literally 'The light of Muhammad'.

18 × 16 × 1 mm  
1992 1–28 37. Wilkinson collection



525



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral motifs and a fish. Dated 1232/1816–17.

ناد علي ١٢٣٢

Nād 'Alī 1232

The name Nād 'Alī is based upon the phrase, 'call upon 'Alī' (*nādi 'Aliyan*) (Schimmel 1989: 36; for the full text and discussion see **Cat. 337**).

17 × 12 × 4 mm  
1992 1–28 3. Wilkinson collection

526



Brass. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is inscribed within a peacock. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1288/1871–2.

سلامعلي بن ابراهيم ١٢٨٨

Salām 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm 1288

18 × 16 × 2 mm  
1992 1–28 29. Wilkinson collection

527



Brass. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. A seated lion is at the top, a cursive inscription with scroll background at the bottom. Dated 1304/1886–7.

ياولي الله ١٣٠٤

O Friend of God 1304

This is probably a reference to Imām 'Alī, who is often represented with a lion. The alif of Allāh is at the end of the word.

18 × 17 × 2.5 mm  
1992 1–28 5 Wilkinson collection

528



Brass. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set into a silver and brass mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. A single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1304/1886–7.

عبد الحسين ١٣٠٤

'Abd al-Ḥusayn 1304

16 × 11 × 5 mm  
1994 8–5 4. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

529



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription with floral scroll background and a prancing deer. Dated 1305/1887–8.

عباس بن محمد هاشم ١٣٠٥

'Abbās b. Muḥammad Hāshim 1305

17 × 13 × 3 mm  
1992 1–28 17. Wilkinson collection

530



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscriptions in *nasta'liq*, the lower one deeply carved into the brass and left in relief. Dated 1308/1890–1.

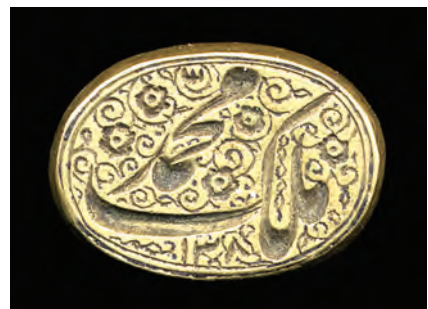
علي گلشن ١٣٠٨

'Alī Gulshan 1308

'Alī in Roman script.

16 × 12 × 3 mm  
1992 1–28 8. Wilkinson collection

531



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Dated 1308/1890–1.

ملك محمد ١٣٠٨

Malik Muḥammad 1308



The name *malik* means 'king'.

17 × 13 × 2 mm  
1992 1–28 12. Wilkinson collection

532



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a mount. The cursive inscription in the form of a *tughra* is deeply carved into the brass. Dated 1309/1891–2.

يا اسد الله الغالب ١٣٠٩

O victorious lion of God 1309

Asadallāh, 'Lion of God', is one of the names given to 'Alī.

17 × 13 × 2 mm  
1992 1–28 27. Wilkinson collection

533



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides set into a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is within a cartouche and with a scroll and dot background. Below the inscription are three oblong shapes with separated into three at the ends, the smaller ones perhaps representing the Prophet's feet.

غلامعلي ١٣١٠

Ghulām 'Alī 1310

Literally 'the servant of 'Alī', a popular name.

18 × 14 × 2 mm  
1992 1–28 30. Wilkinson collection

534



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* against a floral scroll background. The word Muḥammad is reserved in relief against the etched ground. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1311/1893–4.

عبد الحسين بن محمد رضا ١٣١١

His servant, al-Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad Riḍā 1311

It is possible that this is dated 1211, and that the stroke that appears to be making the '3' is in fact part of the decoration. Muḥammad is highlighted because it is the Prophet's name, as well as being the name of the owner of the seal.

21 × 16 × 3 mm  
1992 1–28 2. Wilkinson collection

535



Brass. Oval, flat top and convex base with straight sides. At the top the figure of the lion and sun and below a cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1314/1896–7.

حسين خان ١٣١٤

Ḥusayn Khān 1314

17 × 13 × 3 mm  
1992 1–28 36. Wilkinson collection

536



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1317/1899–1900.

ابن غلامحسين اصغر ١٣١٧

Son of Ghulām Ḥusayn Asghar 1317

*Ghulām*, meaning 'servant', is part of the name. 'Alī Asghar was the infant killed at Kerbela (Schimmel 1989: 35).

17 × 12.5 × 4 mm  
1992 1–28 16. Wilkinson collection

537



Brass. Oval, flat top and slightly concave base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lies against a floral scroll background and is flanked by two fish and a bird below. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1318/1901–2.

قاسم ١٣٠٨

Qāsim 1318

16 × 12 × 6 mm  
1992 1–28 20. Wilkinson collection

538



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides and traces of a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is in an elegant composition with a scroll background. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1318/1901–2.

حسين علي ١٣١٨

Ḥusayn 'Alī 1318

17 × 13 × 3 mm

1992 1–28 26. Wilkinson collection

539



Brass. Oval, flat top and flattish base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a dot and scroll background. A gazelle prances to the right. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1319/1901–2.

مهديقلي ١٣١٩

Mahdī Qulī 1319

Mahdī, the name of the last Shī'a imam, combined with *qulī*, meaning 'slave' (this is a Turkish construction from Qul). *Qulī* is often combined with names in this way (Schimmel 1989: 35–6).

18 × 13 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 14. Wilkinson collection

540



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background on one side. On the other, a head in profile facing left and a fish below. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1319/1901–2.

عبد محمد حسين ١٣١٩

His servant Muḥammad Ḥusayn 1319

16 × 12 × 1.5 mm

1992 1–28 6. Wilkinson collection

541



Brass. Oval flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background. Above is a lion and sun with a wreath at the base. Dated 1320/1902–3.

سلطنت ١٣٢٠

Sultanate 1320

This is presumably an official Qājār seal. The date lies within the reign of Muẓaffar al-Dīn b. Nāṣir al-Dīn (1896–1907), but it is not his personal seal.

19 × 14 × 3 mm

1992 1–28 34. Wilkinson collection

542



Brass. Oval, flat top and base. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background. A figure wearing a turban faces left with a star and crescent above. A line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1321/1903–4.

عبد[ه] شكر الله ١٣٢١

His servant Shukr Allāh 1321

*Shukr*, meaning 'thanks': literally, 'thanks be to God'.

16 × 12 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 13

543



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Traces of a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is below the face of figure wearing a stylised crown in which are Latin letters, perhaps H A M (?). Dated 1321/1903–4.

ناد علي ١٣٢١

Nād 'Alī 1321

The name Nād 'Alī, based upon the phrase, 'call upon 'Alī' (*nādi 'Aliyan*) (Schimmel 1989: 36; see *Cat. 525*).

18 × 14 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 22 Wilkinson collection

544



Brass. Rectangular, flat top with bevelled sides set in a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in a similar arrangement to *Cat. 558*, with floral scroll background. Dated 1322/1904–5.

محسن بن قاسم الطباطبائي ١٣٢١

Muḥsin b. Qāsim Ṭabāṭabā'i. 1322

The Ṭabāṭabā'i are an important Sayyid family in Iran. For other dated seals with this family name see *Cat. 515*.

17 × 16 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 15. Wilkinson collection



545



Brass. Square, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of floral scrolls and clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1325/1907–8.

انجمن اسلام ملي والا مقام لار ۱۳۲۵

The highly regarded National Islamic Society of Lār 1325

Lar is the capital city of Larestan in the province of Fars in southern Iran.

21 × 21 × 3

1992 1–28 25. Wilkinson collection

546



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription with background of floral scrolls. The *wāw* of *abū* and the *lām* of *Qāsim* have been extended to form an arch. Double line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1325/1907–8.

ابو القاسم ۱۳۲۵

Abū al-Qāsim 1325

22 × 15 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 9. Wilkinson collection

547



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Male figure wearing a hat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll background. Dated 1327/1909–10.

عبد الرضا ۱۳۳۷

‘Abd al-Riḏā 1327

19 × 4 × 3 mm

1992 1–28 4 Wilkinson collection

548



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with scroll and dotted ground. A gazelle prances to the right. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1329/1911.

عبدہ عباس ۱۳۲۹

His servant ‘Abbās 1329

17 × 14 × 3 mm

1992 1–28 18. Wilkinson collection

549



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. A male figure with a hat and a cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Dated 1330/1911–12.

زياد ۱۳۳۰

Ziyād 1330

17 × 13 × 1 mm

1992 1–28 1. Wilkinson collection

550



Brass. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides and base with traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1332/1913–14.

سهراباصري ۱۳۳۲

Suhrā[b] Bāširī (?) 1332

Or, Suhrāb Aširī.

17 × 12 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 11. Wilkinson collection



551



Brass. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. The upper half has a cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of scrolls. The lower half has the name misspelt in Roman characters and a row of shrubs. Denticillated border. Dated 1338/1919–20.

يا ابا الحسن ١٣٣٨

O Abā al-Ḥasan 1338

The owner's name is Abū 'l Ḥasan, and at the same time this probably refers to Imām 'Alī (father of Ḥasan).

16 × 15 × 4 mm  
1992 1–28 23. Wilkinson collection

552



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in two cartouches with floral background. In the centre the owner's name, Mahmud Hassan, is spelt out in Roman characters. Dated 1340/1926–7.

محمود حسن زاده ١٣٤٠

Mahmūd Ḥasan zādeh 1340

19 × 14 × 4 mm  
1992 1–28 21. Wilkinson collection

553



Brass. Oval with flat top and bevelled sides set in a metal mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with schematised scroll pattern in the background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1347/1928–9.

باقر الطباطبائي ١٣٤٧

Bāqir al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1347

The Ṭabāṭabā'ī are an important Sayyid family in Iran. For other seals bearing this name see Cat. 515 and 544.

19 × 13 × 4 mm  
1994 8–5 11. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

### Brass seals with only two or three numerals

554



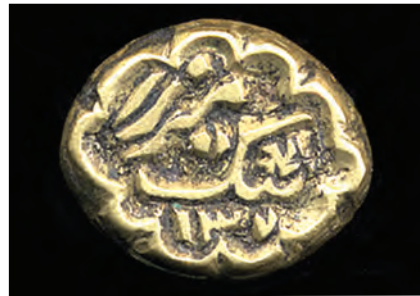
Brass. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set into a silver mount. A turquoise is set in the mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lies against a background of floral scrolls. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Numerals 130, probably indicating the date 1300/1882.

عبدہ محمد علي بن عبد الحميد ١٣٠

His servant Muḥammad 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 130

20 × 15 × 2 mm  
1994 8–5 9. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran.

555



Brass. Oval, with flat base and bevelled sides and traces of a mount. The cursive inscription is carved deeply into the brass. Numerals 137. Possibly 13[0]7/1889.

میرزا بیگ ١٣٧

Mīrzā Beg 137

13 × 11 × 3 mm  
1992 1–28 32. Wilkinson collection

556



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides and traces of a mount. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* is within a cartouche set between two confronting eagles. The numerals 137. Possibly 137[0]/1950–1.

حیدر ١٣٨

Ḥaydar 137

19.5 × 16 × 4 mm  
1992 1–28 19. Wilkinson collection

557



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with slightly bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. A cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a floral scroll background in the centre and surrounded by a wreath. The numerals 3 and 4 on either side of the knot.

خاتم ثریا ٣٤

The ring of Thurayyā 34

17 × 13 × 2.5 mm  
1992 1–28 7. Wilkinson collection

558



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides and traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*, an arch created from the *wāw* of *huwa* and the *lām* of *al-'Alī*. The numerals 34 at the base, probably indicating 1304/1886–7.

هو علي اكبر ٣٤

He is 'Alī Akbar 34

14 × 11 × 2.5 mm

1992 1–28 28. Wilkinson collection

559



Brass. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Traces of a mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* which stands out from the carved-in ground. Numerals 37, possibly indicating 1337/1918–19.

محمد حسين ٣٧

Muhammad Ḥusayn 37

13.5 × 10 × 2 mm

1992 1–28 31. Wilkinson collection

## 8. Indo-Muslim and miscellaneous seals

For a discussion of this group of seals, see 'Indo-Muslim seals' in the Introduction.<sup>1</sup>

The seals have been classified into several groups depending on the types of inscriptions they bear.

The first group (A) are predominantly brass seals and they clearly belonged to individuals who are described as working for the court (*banda-i dargāh*) or for an individual emperor, or official sometimes with the term *fidawī*. They are dated and some have a regnal year after the date. They are arranged in chronological order. A sub-group are also likely to be seals of officials. This is indicated by the presence of a regnal year or the phrase *banda-i dargāh*. Some seals just include a regnal year.

Group B make no obvious reference to the court but their owners may be court officials or private individuals. The seals are engraved with names sometimes with an associated benedictory phrase and are arranged chronologically, some include regnal years. Although some (e.g. **Cat. 579**) have benedictory phrases in Persian, they belong stylistically with the other Indo-Muslim seals. Sub-groups include seals dated in the Vikram Samvat era and undated seals. Group C is a small group of forged royal Mughal seals.

Group D are seals made for Europeans serving in India, while group (E) are seals for Europeans resident in Iran.

### A. Servants of the court and the Emperor

560



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with clusters of dots in the background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1069/1658–9.

داود ابن زکریا بنده درگاه ۱۰۶۹

Dāwūd b. Zakarīyā, servant of the court 1069

22 × 1 mm  
1903 11–25 11. Talbot collection

561



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with clusters of dots in the background. Dated 1075/1665–6, regnal year 7 of the reign of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707).

نورالحسن بنده بادشاه عالم گیر ۱۰۷۵ (۷)

Nūr al-Ḥasan, servant of Emperor 'Ālamgīr 1075/7

31 × 2 mm  
1903 11–25 5. Talbot collection

562



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with clusters of dots in the background. Dated 1101/1689–90, regnal year 34 of the reign of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707).

رامرای بنده بادشاه عالم گیر ۱۱۰۱ (۳۴)

Rām Rā'ī, servant of Emperor 'Ālamgīr 1101/34

23 × 2 mm  
1889 10–18 2 Presented by C. J. Rogers

563



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1114/1702–3, regnal year 46 of the reign of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707).

صاحب رام فدوی شاهزاده محمد معز الدین بهادر ۱۱۱۴ (۴۶)

Ṣāhib Rām, humble servant of Prince Muhammad Mu'izz al-Dīn, the brave 1114/46.

27 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 44. Auckland collection

564



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Clusters of dots in the background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1119/1707–8 regnal year 1 of the reign of Shāh 'Ālam I (1119–1124/1707–12).

دناناته روح الله خانی (سنة احد) ۱۱۱۹

Dīnānāth Rūḥallāh Khānī 1119 year 1

Although the exact term denoting subservience is not mentioned, the syntax and the use of the adjective 'Rūḥallāh Khānī' indicates that Dīnānāth was possibly a slave.

26 × 19 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 51. Auckland collection



565



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of dots. Dated 1127/1715–16. Reign of Farrukhsiyar (1124–1131/1713–19).

وزیر ابن قیامخان بنده درگاه ۱۱۲۷

Wazīr b. Qiyām Khān, servant of the court 1127

26 × 19 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 58. Auckland collection

566



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1133/1720–1, regnal year 3 of the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad (1131–1161/1719–1748).

جان محمد فدوی پادشاه غازی محمد شاه  
۱۱۳۳ (۳)

Jān Muḥammad, humble servant of emperor Muḥammad Shāh, Warrior of the Faith 1133/3

45 × 1.5 mm  
1903 11–25 6. Talbot collection

567



Brass round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of florets. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1161/1748–9, regnal year 1 of Aḥmad Shāh Bahādur (1161–1167/1748–54)

حکمت یابخان فدوی بادشاه غازی احمد  
شاه بهادر ۱۱۶۱ (احد)

Ḥikmat Yābkhān, humble servant of Aḥmad Shāh Bahādur, emperor and warrior of the faith. 1161, one

44 × 2 mm  
1903 11–25 3. Talbot collection

568



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of florets and scrolling stems. Dotted border around the edge of the seal. Dated 1171/1757–8, regnal year 4 of the reign of 'Azīz al-Dīn 'Ālamgīr II (1167–1173/1748–54).

عالیه سلطان بیگم بنت ظفر جنگ  
بهادر سنه ۱۱۷۱ (سنه ۴)

'Āliya Sulṭān Begum, daughter of Zafar Jang, Bahādur year 1171 year 4

59 × 1 mm  
1903 11–25 2. Talbot collection

569



Carnelian, pale to dark orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with a background of floral scrolls. A border of cross motifs. Dated 1224/1809–10.

سید حسن ولد میر شاه بنده درگاه ۱۲۲۴

Sayyid Ḥasan Shāh son of Mīr Shāh is the servant of the court 1224

*Walad* is used here instead of *ibn* or *bin*. For other examples see Cat. 574, 593, 618).

21 × 15 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 24. Auckland collection

**Seals of officials (the phrase *banda-i dargāh* + regnal year or regnal year on its own)**

570



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Year 4.

قطب خان ککبور بنده درگاه غفور (۴)

Quṭb Khān Kakabūr, servant at the court of Ghafūr

*Ghafūr* ('forgiving'), rhyming with Kakabūr is one of the names of God and therefore the *dargāh* here is the threshold or court of God.

23 × 1 mm  
1903 11–25 9. Talbot collection

571



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of dots.

نایکی رای بنده درگاه

Nāyiki Rāi, slave of the court

24 × 1 mm  
1893 4–25 176. Franks collection

572



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of dots and scrolling stems. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

امرسی ابن جسونت بنده درگاه

Amarsī b. Jaswant, servant of the court

21 × 1 mm  
1903 11–25 8. Talbot collection

### Name and regnal year only

573



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with background of clusters of dots. Numeral 4.

کشن چند ابن بهوانیداس (۴)

Kishan Chand, son of Bhawānī Dās 4

20 × 15 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 56. Auckland collection

574



Leaded brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of sprigs and clusters of dots. Worn surface. Numeral 4.

کمال ولد عالم (۴)

Kamāl son of 'Ālim 4

22 × 18 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 57. Auckland collection

575



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Background of florets and clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Numeral 6.

هدایت الله الحسینی (۶)

Hidāyat Allāh al-Ḥusaynī 6

Hidāyat Allāh al-Ḥusaynī was a librarian under Shāh Jahān (1037–1068/1628–1657) and 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707) (John Seyller, pers. comm.). His *nisba* al-Ḥusaynī indicates that he claims descent morally from Imām Ḥusayn.

22 × 17 × 2 mm  
1903 11–25 12. Talbot collection

576



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with clusters of dots in the background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Numeral 6.

بالکرشن ابن ستیداس (۶)

Bālkrishan son of Safīdās 6

The name is Bālkrishna, the 'boy Krishna'.

21 × 21 mm  
1893 4–26 177

577



Brass, rectangular, flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Single line around the edge of the seal. Numerals 11.

محمد زاهد بن شیخ محمد مقیم (۱۱)

Muḥammad Zāhid, son of Shaykh  
Muḥammad Muqīm 11

13 × 12 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 68. Auckland collection



578



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Clusters of dots in the background. Numerals 45.

میر رستم ابن میرک جان (۴۵)

Mīr Rustam, the son of Mīrak Jān 45

21 × 16 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 57. Auckland collection

**B. Dated seals, officials or private individuals arranged chronologically**

579



Brass, round and flat. Pierced at the base. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1060/1650–51.

ما را بس این شرف که محمد شفیع ماست  
یا قاضی الحاجات انت القاضی ۱۰۶۰

It is enough of an honour for us that Muḥammad is our intercessor. O provider of needs, you are the one who decides 1060  
The metre is *muḍā'iri*.

29 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 42. Auckland collection

580



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* on three lines. Background of clusters of dots, double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1084/1673–4.

سیدی یاقوت ابن سیدی مرجان ۱۰۸۴

Sayyidī Yāqūt b. Sayyidī Marjān 1084

The names Yāqūt, meaning emerald, and Marjān, meaning coral, are frequently associated with slaves (Schimmel 1989: 70–1).

24 × 1.2 mm  
1903 11–25 10. Talbot collection

581



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of clusters of dots and star shapes. Dated 1072/1661–2, regnal year 4 of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707).

شایخ رستم خادم الفقراء ۱۰۷۲ (۴)

Shaykh Rustam servant of the poor 1072/4

The phrase 'servant of the poor' suggests a possible connection to a Sufi shrine.

27 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14300

582



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian. Background of clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1080/1669–70.

لطف الله شد ز مهر حسین ۱۰۸۰

The favour of God comes from the love of Husayn 1080

28 × 1 mm  
OA + 14379. Masson collection 188 (Metal objects 1)

583



Carnelian, dark-orange. Round, flat with bevelled sides, damaged. Inscribed in cursive *nasta'liq* script on three lines. A single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1090/1679–80, regnal year 22 of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707).

میرزا شمس الدین ابن شاه حسین ۱۰۹۰ (۲۲)

Mīrzā Shams al-Dīn b. Shāh Ḥusayn 1090/22

It could also be read Mīrzā Shāh ibn Shams al-Dīn Ḥusayn.

26 × 3.5 mm  
1853 3–28 17



584



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* on three lines. Dated 1120/1708–9, regnal year 2 of the reign of 'Ālamgīr II (1167–1173/1754–59).

خواجه برهان الله ابن خواجه فاضل ۱۱۷۰  
(۲)

Khawja Burhān Allāh b. Khawja Fāḍil  
1170/2

Burhān Allāh literally means 'proof of God'.

23 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 46. Auckland collection

585



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of sprigs and clusters of dots. Dated 1123, regnal year 5 the reign of Shāh Ālam Bahādūr (1119–1124/1701–1712).

احمد ابن محمد حكيم ۱۱۲۳ (۵)

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ḥakīm 1123/5

25 × 20 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 52. Auckland collection

586



Carnelian, orange. Pear-shaped, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian and Arabic with a background of floral scrolls within a narrow dotted border. Dated 1128/1715–1716.

هو الله قل اللهم مالك الملك عبده دين  
محمد بن عباد الله محمد بهادر خان  
شيباني چنگز خاني عناب ۱۱۲۸

Lines 1–6: He is God, say 'O God owner of sovereignty' (Qur'ān 3:26). His servant Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Ibād Allāh b. Muḥammad Bahādūr Khān Shaybānī Chingiz Khānī 'Ināb 1128

The *nisbas* Shaybānī Chingiz Khānī indicate the owners' kinship to the Uzbeks. The name Dīn Muḥammad is also particular to Central Asia.

25 × 18 × 5 mm  
1853 3–28 19. Auckland collection

587



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides in the cursive script *nasta'liq*. Each inscription dated 1130/1717–18 and 1146/1733–4 respectively and each enclosed by a chevron pattern.

Side A

عابد شاه ابن بدر شاه ۱۱۳۰

Side B

سيد رحيم يار خان ۱۱۴۶

Side A: 'Ābid Shāh b. Badr Shāh 1130

Side B: Sayyid Raḥīm Yār Khān 1146

19 × 14 × 3 mm  
1853 3–28 33. Auckland collection

588



Quartz, pale yellow-orange carnelian. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of *mughul khānī*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1146/1733–34.

اصالت بيگ چين مغلخاني ۱۱۴۶

Iṣālat Beg Chīn Mughulkhānī 1146

17 × 14 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 26. Auckland collection

589



Chalcedony, black. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides with background of floral sprigs. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Dated 1160/1747–8, regnal year 29 of Muḥammad Shāh (1131–1161/1719–48).

عتیق اللہ خان سنہ ۱۱۶۰ (۲۹)

‘Atīq Allāh Khān 1160/29

‘Atīq Allāh was a name given to the first caliph Abū Bakr meaning ‘freed by God’ because ‘God had freed him from hellfire’ (Schimmel 1989: 64).

14 × 13 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14304

590



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1167/1753–4.

رحیم اللہ ۱۱۶۷

Rahīm Allāh 1167

16 × 12 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 63. Auckland collection

591



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*, a narrow border of alternating crosses and lines. Dated 1171/1757–8.

حافظ سنۃ اللہ محمد ضیاء ۱۱۷۱

(1–3) The keeper of the sunna (tradition) of God Muḥammad, Ḍiyā’ 1171

21 × 15 × 6 mm  
1853 3–28 32. Auckland collection

592



Carnelian, dark-orange. Octagonal, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* divided into two sections by the return of the letter *yā* of Sahānī (or Sahā’ī). Floral sprigs in the background. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1178/1764–5.

بھولانا تھے سہانی مہر چند ۱۱۷۸

Bholānāth Sahānī, Mihra Chand 1178

Bholānāth is a name of Mahadeva, the God Shiva.

15 × 13 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 34. Auckland collection

593



Quartz, carnelian orange. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Dated 1185/1771–2.

الف خان ولد محمد زاہد ۱۱۸۵

(1–3) Alf Khān son of Muḥammad Zāhid 1185

*Walad* is used instead of the more usual *bin* or *ibn*.

19 × 13 × 4 mm  
1853 3–28 25. Auckland collection

594



Brass in the form of an oval cartouche with protruding ends. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1188/1774–75.

سلیمانم غلام ہشت [و] چارم بدرگاہ خدا  
امیدوارم ۱۱۸۸

I am Sulaymān. I am the servant of the eight and four; my hope is set on the court of God 1188

The ‘eight and four’ are the Twelve Imams and the inscription is in *hazaj* metre. The shape of the seal is similar to the *boteh* found on Indian textiles.

24 × 16 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 72. Auckland collection

595



Carnelian, orange. Almond-shaped with flat top and base and bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with background of scrolls and clusters of dots. Dated 1194/1780–1.

عبدہ شاہ محمد ۱۱۹۴

His servant Shāh Muḥammad 1194

16 × 10 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 38. Auckland collection



596



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* in Persian with background of scrolls and clusters of dots. Dated 1207/1792–3.

يارب بحق شاه نجف مرتضى علي بخشا  
بروز حشر گناه حسن علي ١٢٠٧

O God, for the sake of the King of Najaf 'Alī Murtaḏā (the approved one) pardon the sins of Ḥasan 'Alī on the day of Resurrection 1207

'Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib was buried at Najaf in Iraq and is often referred to as the 'King of Najaf'. Alexander Morton describes the metre as *muḏari* although the rhyme is imperfect.

24 × 16 × 1.8 mm  
1853 3–28 55. Auckland collection

597



Dark-orange carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. It is engraved in *nasta'liq* script on both sides, each of which bears a date: side A 1208/1793–4, side B 1235/1819–20.

Side A

امير حمزه ١٢٠٨

Side B

شيخ هدايت الله ١٢٣٥

Side A: Amīr Ḥamza 1208

Side B: Shaykh Hidāyat Allāh 1235

21 × 16 × 3 mm  
1853 3–28 23. Auckland collection

598



Unalloyed copper. Oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1212/1797–8.

كانجي مل ١٢١٢

Kānjī Mal 1212

17 × 13 × 2.5  
1853 3–28 61. Auckland collection

599



Orange carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian with flowers in the background enclosed by a marginal decorative frame. Dated 1223/1808–19.

فتاح پرو دين محمد ١٢٢٣

Fattāḥ is the follower of the religion of Muḥammad 1223

Muḥammad is used both to convey the owner's allegiance to the Prophet Muḥammad and to represent his own name, Muḥammad Fattāḥ.

12 × 9 × 2.2 mm  
1853 3–28 28. Auckland collection

600



Brass, oval and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of clusters of dots and scrolling stems. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1224/1808–9.

عبدہ حسن علی ١٢٢٤

Ḥasan 'Alī, His slave 1224

'His' refers to God.

18 × 14 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 59. Auckland collection

601



Quartz, bright orange carnelian. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) with background of floral stems enclosed within a border of cross motifs. Dated 1228/1813–14.

ساون لعل ١٢٢٨

Sāwun (?) La'l 1228

18 × 14 × 6.5 mm  
1853 3–28 39. Auckland collection



602



Carnelian, bright-orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Background of clusters of dots and a cross motif in the corner enclosed within a rectangular frame. Dated 1234/1818–19 (?).

پني پرشاد ۱۲۳۴

Panī Pershād 1234 (?)

17 × 14 × 5 mm  
1853 3–28 41. Auckland collection

603



Chalcedony, yellow. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with floral scroll background. Double lines around the edge of the seal. Dated 1235/1819–20.

عبدہ میر کرم شاہ ۱۲۳۵

His servant Mīr Karam Shāh 1235

'His servant' means 'the servant of God' in this context.

15 × 13 × 2.5 mm  
1853 3–28 35. Auckland collection

604



Unalloyed copper. Round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with background of floral scrolls enclosed within a circular frame. Dated 1238/1822–23.

بدھي چند ۱۲۳۸

Badhī Chand 1238

18 × 3 mm  
1903 11–16 11

605



Orange carnelian. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian divided into two by the return of the *yā* of 'Alī'. Scroll and flower background. Dated 1241/1825–6.

سید بدر علی حسینی ۱۲۴۱

Sayyid Badr 'Alī Ḥusaynī 1241

16 × 13 × 3.5 mm  
1853 3–28 40. Auckland collection

606



Unalloyed copper, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script dated 1245/1829–30.

کریم بخش ۱۲۴۵

Karīm Bakhsh 1245

16 × 15 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 50. Auckland collection

607



Brass, rectangular flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script within an elaborate ornamental frame. Dated 1251/1835–6.

امیر علی ۱۲۵۱

Amīr 'Alī 1251

19 × 16 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 66. Auckland collection.

608



Brass, oval, flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian dated 1297/1879–80.

امیدوار بفضل الہی محمد ۱۲۹۷

Muhammad is hopeful of the grace of God 1297

17 × 14 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 60. Auckland collection

*Hijra and AD dates*

609



White chalcedony. Round, flat with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides, a picture of a woman, head covered facing right and on the other an inscription in *nasta'liq* script within a scroll border with two dates: 1206 at the top and 1791 (the equivalent AD date to 1206). It is possible that this may be an ancient seal which has been re-engraved.

چارلس پیرا ۱۲۰۶ ۱۷۹۱

1206 Charles Pereira 1791

Pereira, a Portuguese name, is a common name in Goa.

12 × 10 × 3.2 mm  
1853 3–28 18. Auckland collection

*Three numerals only*

610



Brass, rectangular and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian. There are three numerals only 122 possibly 1202/1787 or 1203/1788

دارد امید شفاعت ز محمد نقی ۱۲۲  
Naqī hopes for the intercession of Muḥammad. 122 (or 123)

The metre is *ramal*.

15 × 12 × 1.5 mm  
1853 3–28 69. Auckland collection

611



Brass, rectangular, flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script in Persian. Double lines around the edge of the seal. It bears the numerals 124 perhaps 12[0]4/1789–90, starting from the bottom:

دارد امید شفاعت ز محمد رمضان ۱۲۴

Ramaḍān hopes for the intercession of Muḥammad 124

The name could also be Muḥammad Ramaḍān. Alexander Morton suggests that this could be a hemistich in *ramal* metre.

17 × 15 × 1 mm  
1853 3–28 67. Auckland collection

*Vikram Samvat era<sup>2</sup>*

612



Bright-orange carnelian. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of floral scrolls and clusters of dots. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated VS 1887/1830 AD.

دلارام ۱۸۸۷

Dulārām (?) 1887

12 × 10 × 3.2 mm  
1853 3–28 29. Auckland collection

613



Pale yellow-orange carnelian. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with a background of floral scrolls enclosed within a herringbone border. Dated 1878/1821.

گوردیال ۱۸۷۸

Gūr Dayāl (?)

15 × 10 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 27. Auckland collection

614



Carnelian, bright-orange. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of floral scrolls and hatched border. Dated VS 1891/1834 AD.

نہال چند ۱۸۹۱

Nihāl Chand 1891

11 × 7 × 2.2 mm  
1853 3–28 30. Auckland collection

615



Dark-orange carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Bilingual inscription in Persian and Devanagari with background of floral scrolls. Dated VS 1931/1874 AD.

فتح چند ۱۹۳۱

Inner circle: (Persian) Faṭḥ Chand 1931

Outer circle: (Devanagari) Sri Gangāputra Faṭḥ Chand son of Dīwānchand 1931



The Gangāputras are a Brahmin community who conduct pilgrimage rites and rituals in holy towns located on the banks of the Ganges.

28 × 25 × 6 mm  
1893 4–26 163. Franks collection (Register note: 'From India')

### Undated seals

616



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with elaborate background of clusters of flowers and scrolling stems. Double lines around the edge of the seal.

العبد دمودر داس ابن كيشو داس

The slave Damūdar Dās b. Kīshū Dās  
Normally Kesu a derivative of Keshava.

21 × 1.2 mm  
1893 4–26 175. Franks collection

617



Brass, round and flat. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with background of scrolling stems and clusters of dots.

هر بنس ابن گوپال داس

Harbans (?), son of Gopāl Dās  
16 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 47. Auckland collection

618



Brass, square, flat top and base Cursive inscription with background of clusters of dots. Single line around the edge of the seal.

بہادر خان ولد محمد خان

Bahādūr Khān, son of Muḥammad Khān  
18 × 18 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 65. Auckland collection

619



Leaded brass. Oval, flat top and base and bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script. Single line around the edge of the seal.

غلام علي خان

Ghulām 'Alī Khān  
15 × 12 × 1 mm  
1903 11–16 12

620



Quartz, orange carnelian. Oval, flat with bevelled sides in a silver mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of floral scrolls.

اریک نارس

Arīk (?) Nars  
10 × 12 mm  
OA+ 14286

621



Quartz, orange carnelian. Oval flat top and base with bevelled sides. The cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* lies against a floral scroll ground. A similar band is engraved around the edge of the seal, the whole enclosed by double lines.

دسائی (?)

Desā'ī (?)

22 × 15 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14263

### C. Forgeries of royal seals

The two following seals are purporting to be Mughal royal seals one of the Emperor Akbar and the other from the reign of 'Alamgir (pers. comm. John Seyller).

622



Brass, round and flat with handle. Inscription in cursive *nasta'liq* script on three lines. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1013/1604–5.

محمد اکبر باد شاه غازي ۱۰۱۳

Muhammad Akbar warrior of the faith 1013.

This seal is purporting to be that of the Mughal emperor Akbar (963–1014/1556–1605). It is more likely that is a late nineteenth-century fabrication. An impression of the genuine seal is on a manuscript in the Asiatic Society of Bengal (*Tuhfat al-Ahrar*; Curzon no. 237 f. 1a).<sup>3</sup>

38 × 24 mm (with mount)  
1903 11–25 5. Talbot collection



623



Brass, round and flat with cylindrical handle. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq*. Single line around the edge of the seal. Dated 1107. Reign of 'Ālamgīr (1068–1118/1658–1707)

شہاب دین انصاری خانہ زاد امیر المؤمنین بادشاہ عالم گیر غازی ۱۱۰۷

Shihāb [al-] Dīn Anṣārī the Commander of the Faithful Emperor 'Ālamgīr, Warrior for the Faith 1107

Shihāb Dīn should be Shihāb al-Dīn. John Seyller has suggested that this was made after a genuine seal whose inscription has been rearranged. See Shakeb 1990: no. 13.

44 × 25 mm (diam.: 36 mm)  
1903 11–25 4. Talbot collection

### D. Seals made for Europeans and officials serving in India

Seals inscribed with Persian inscriptions in *nasta'liq* style were used by East India company officials for political and commercial purposes.<sup>4</sup> This is graphically demonstrated by a portrait of Warren Hastings (1732–1818) by Joshua Reynolds in the National Portrait Gallery, London, which shows him seated by a table on which are documents bearing seals in red ink and a silver seal with a conical mount (NPG 445). It is interesting that although they cannot be deciphered it is clear that the inscriptions on both the documents and the seal are in Arabic script. Officials of the company had their names transliterated into Persian and, as theoretical servants of the Mughal emperor, the seals sometimes bore the emperor's name, and the honorific title that he bestowed, and dates in either the Hijra era or Christian era calendars. The word used for indicating that the official was the servant of the emperor is *fidawī*.

624



Round silver seal and pyramidal mount with bilingual inscriptions in Persian and Roman characters. The Persian inscription in *nasta'liq* has an elaborate background of floral scrolls. It is divided into four sections by the returns of the final letters of the words at the end of each line. Dated 1180/1766–7.

Margin (Roman): The Unit [*sic*] English East India Company

۱۱۸۰

شاه عالم بادشاہ غازی  
عمدہ تجارت کمپنی انگریزی فدوی  
دیوان خاصہ شریفہ صوباجات  
بنکالا و بہار و اوریسا

Centre (Persian): The Honorable, the Chief of the Merchants, the English Company, *Dīwān* (Controller of Finance of the Noble Exchequer) of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, humble servant of Shāh 'Ālam, the Emperor and Warrior for the Faith 1180

This important seal of the East India Company commemorates the granting to the Company of the financial control of the provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by the Emperor Shāh 'Ālam II in 1180/1766–7. The 'ed' of United has been omitted in error or for lack of space.

67 × 45 mm (with mount)  
1970 3–9 1. Presented by Estelle W. Fuller (Bayly 1994: 66, no. 50)

625



Brass, round and flat with conical mount. Cursive inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script. Background of floral scrolls and clusters of dots. Dated 1178/1764–5 and regnal year 6 of the reign of Shāh 'Ālam II (1173–1202/1760–88).

مستر رندلف بارتھ عیاد الدولہ بہادر  
فدوی بادشاہ غازی شاہ عالم ۱۱۷۸ سنہ ۶

Mr Randolph Barth (or Barrett) refuge of the state Bahādur, loyal servant of the victorious Pādshāh 'Ālam year 1178/6

Diam. 62 mm; with mount: 69 mm  
OA+ 1340

626



Round silver seal with conical mount with cursive inscription in Persian in *nasta'liq* script. Dated 1199/1784–5, regnal year 27 of the reign of Shāh 'Ālam (1173–1202/1759–88)

کرنیل کبریل ہارپر سر افراز الدولہ اسد  
جنگ بہادر فدوی شاہ عالم بدشاہ غازی  
۱۷۸۵

Colonel Gabriel Harper, Exalted of the State and Lion of War, humble servant of Shāh 'Ālam, the Emperor and Warrior of the Faith. 1199/year 27.

Colonel Gabriel Harper was an important figure in the East India Company and was based at Oudh. He was appointed to the court of Nawwāb Shujā' al-Dawlah in 1770 to command the troops based at Cawnpore. He acted as intermediary for the East India Company with the Nawwāb and benefited hugely from the saltpetre trade, used for the production of gunpowder, one of the principal assets of the province of Oudh. Against Company rules he gained a monopoly and was discharged from his post in 1773. He was appointed Resident in Lucknow in 1785, a post established by Warren Hastings. This seal is likely to have been made to commemorate this event. He is featured in a painting by Tilly Kettle in the Victoria Memorial museum in Calcutta which shows Shujā' al-Dawlah, his four sons and General Sir Robert Barker Commander in Chief of the army. (Buckland 1906: 191; Yalland 1987: 33; Llewellyn Jones 1985: 34, 94–5; Llewellyn Jones 1993: 65; Porter 1997: 27.

64 × 72 mm (with mount)  
1996 3–25 1

627



Quartz, pale orange carnelian set in a gold mount with a walrus ivory handle. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with an elaborate foliate background. Dated 1839 (AD)

میجر جنرل سر ولوبی کاتن سنه ۱۸۳۹

Major General Sir Willoughby Cotton year 1839

Sir Willoughby Cotton (1783–1860) son of Admiral Rowland Cotton, began a

distinguished military career by joining the Guards in 1798. He went to India in 1821 and between 1838–39 commanded the Bengal division of the Army of the Indus. He was awarded the K.C.B in 1838 at Ghazna in Afghanistan. In 1839, the year engraved on the seal, he left Kabul and returned to India where he served as Commander in Chief at Bombay between 1847 and 1850 (Buckland 1906: 97).

37 × 30 mm; with mount: 105 mm  
1992 6–26 1

628



Carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral scroll background. Dated 1222/1807–8.

ارنست مست تالور بیگ بهادر ۱۲۲۲

Ernest Mast (?) Taylor Beg Bahādur 1222

The reading is uncertain.

28.5 × 20 × 2 mm  
OA+ 13941

629



Rectangular silver seal with pyramidal mount. Cursive inscription in *nasta'liq* with floral sprigs in the background and in the margin.

کپتان جمس کاتنهم کاردن بهادر

Captain James Cottenham Gordon Bahādur.

30 × 22 mm; length with mount: 60 mm  
1892 2–16 24.

630



Orange carnelian. Oval, flat with bevelled sides and set into a silver mount. The background is of elegant floral scrolls. The monogram, CD in Roman characters is at the top and the name in *nasta'liq* script below. Dated 1234/1818–19.

چارلس دیکر صاحب بهادر ۱۲۳۴

1. CD
2. Bahādur
3. Charles Dacre Ṣāhib 1234

49 × 41 × 68 mm (with mount)  
1979 3–9 2.

631



Sealing wax seal impression. *Nasta'liq* inscription on five lines with background of floral scrolls and decorative border. East India Company seal in the name of Edward Earl of Ellenborough, Governor General of India, 1842–44. It is dated 1842.



Chosen of the noblemen of great rank, special adviser to to Her Gracious Majesty, the Queen of England whose court is as high as Saturn. Lord Ellenborough Governor General, Chief Governor of the protected provinces of the government of the English East India Company in the country of India. In the year of our Lord 1842.

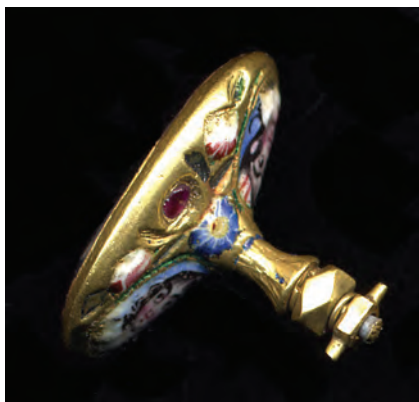


121 × 115 mm (max.)  
1994 8–5 20. Donated by Sir Denis Wright

Ink stamp reproduced courtesy of the British Library. Mss Eur D693/2 403

### *E. Miscellaneous seals: foreign residents of Iran*

632



Carnelian in a enamelled gold mount in Qajar style. Inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of scrolls and clusters of dots. Dated 1260/1844–5.

ولیم هنری گری

William Henry Gray 1260

Not yet identified, this may be one of a number of English traders in Iran in the nineteenth century with the revival of English commercial interests in the country (Wright 1977: chapt. 7).

Dimensions: 18 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
OA+ 14380

633



Carnelian, oval with flat top. Set within an elaborate brass mount. Inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of floral scrolls. Made for Sir Denis Wright while serving as British Ambassador in Iran (see Introduction, p. 21).

Sir Denis Wright

34 × 45 mm (max.)  
1994 8–5 18

سر  
دنيس  
رايت

634



Carnelian, oval with flat top. Set within an elaborate brass mount. Etched inscription in *nasta'liq* script with a background of floral scrolls. Made for Lady Wright while Sir Denis was serving as British Ambassador in Iran.

Lady Wright

25 × 45 mm (max.)  
1994 8–5 18

رايت  
ليدي

#### Notes

- Chapter 8 has been catalogued with the help of Shailendra Bhandore, John Seyller and Alexander Morton.
- For this dating see Introduction p. 10.
- I am grateful to John Seyller for this information.
- For a brief description of the use of East India Company seals, see Dymond 1979: 47–56; Morgan 1991: 30–2.



## 9. Amulets: Introduction

In Arabic there is no single word for an amulet; a variety are found in different parts of the Middle East and North Africa. These include *hirz* in the Maghreb, used largely for a written charm; *hijāb* in Egypt; *ṭilsam*, which derives from the Greek, in Iran and elsewhere (Doutté 1909: 147; Lane 1981: 249; Ruska and Carra da Vaux, 'Ṭilsam' EI<sup>2</sup>). A group of metal amulets are known as *māskeh* from the Arabic verb *masaka* to hold. Canaan attributes this to the belief that the *māskeh* 'holds the foetus of the pregnant woman *in situ*, i.e. it prevents abortion' (Canaan 1937: 70).

In English the terms 'amulet' and 'talisman' are often used interchangeably. 'Amulet' is used here, following Savage-Smith, who has defined it as 'any relatively small object intended to be worn to ensure protection and well-being ... usually made of long-lasting materials and apparently meant to function over a long period'. This last distinguishes the 'amulet' from objects made for the same purpose but in more ephemeral materials, such as paper, for which the term 'talisman' can be used. Hence, the term 'talismanic' may be used to describe objects which have a magical design, such as 'talismanic discs' (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 133. See also Hamès, 'Amulet', EI<sup>3</sup>).

### Positive and negative amulets

While the majority of the British Museum amulets are inscribed in positive and are made from a variety of materials, hardstones or metal, a significant group are inscribed in negative. The metal ones, which probably date to the nineteenth century are used to make impressions on paper which are taken away and used by the client. Their magical power is believed to come into force once they have been stamped (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 133ff.). They are not 'true' amulets as the ones engraved in positive are, which hold the power in themselves.

Another group, inscribed in negative and made from hardstones, are much earlier, belonging to the early medieval period. They often contain strings of incomprehensible letters, and it is hard to imagine how precisely they would have been used. As amulets, it is possible that their magic and obscurity were enhanced by their being engraved in reverse. They are unlikely to have been used for stamping and, as will be argued, appear to have been rendered deliberately obscure.

### Amulets and the place of magic in Islam

The wearing of amulets as protection, or for warding off the evil eye, entered the life of the early Muslims as one of a number of pre-Islamic practices absorbed into Muslim culture, and is tolerated in Islamic theology. In Arabic the word *sihr*, magic, has a variety of connotations from 'that which entrances the eye' to 'actions effected through recourse to demons' (Fahd, 'Sihr', EI<sup>2</sup>). In general terms, while licit magicians constrain the spirits by obeying and supplicating God, illicit magicians enslave the spirits by offerings and evil deeds. The tenth-century author Ibn al-Nadīm writes in his *Fihrist*: 'All exorcists and magicians (that is licit and illicit magicians) assert that they have seals, charms of paper, sandal, *jazāb* [possibly a plant used for drugs], smoke and other things used in their arts' (Ibn al-Nadīm 1970: 725–6 and note 4), and also adds: 'one group of philosophers and servants of the stars assert that they have

talismans based on astronomical observations for all things desired in connection with wonderful actions'. Black magic as practised by 'illicit magicians' is condemned most strongly in the *Ḥadīth*, while later Muslim lawyers attempted to clarify the separation between licit and illicit magic and what was tolerated. Although in general terms that which did no harm to others was accepted, the situation is highly complex, with Ibn Khaldūn, for example, regarding all magic as illicit but distinguishing between sorcery and talismans (Hamès 1993: 204–8).

### The relationship between amulet maker and client<sup>1</sup>

A deeply rooted popular belief in the protective magic powers of amulets ensures that amulets are still produced and worn in many Islamic countries. The extent of this practice is difficult to assess by outsiders, and relevant publications are rare (Canaan 1937–38, and Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1962 are among the most important). In certain parts of the Islamic world children learn at an early age to wear their amulets concealed and not to talk about them in order to preserve the protective powers. A further reason for secrecy is a general awareness that religious authorities are divided in their opinion on the legality of amulets.

The desire by people to own amulets has always been the basis for a lucrative business. Preferred sources of amulets have always been reputable sheikhs, who were associated with major mosques. Here the clients were sure that only 'white' magic was applied. White magic includes quotations from the Qur'ān, prayers, invocations and the 'Names of God', names of prophets, imams, angels, etc., and abbreviations or numerical equivalents of these. After a short personal conversation with a client, the sheikh either wrote a magic text on a piece of paper or designed an amulet to be engraved on metal or stone, preferably carnelian. Such custom-made amulets are considered to be the most powerful. Less expensive amulets are made in serial production. A wide range in the quality of design and craftsmanship and consequently in the costs indicate that all segments of the market are supplied. Islamic amulets with 'black magic' inscriptions and symbols such as invocations of sinister *jinn* and devils may exist, but they are difficult to define and detect.

None of the many amulets that have been studied indicate engravers' or clients' names, place names, or workshop marks and dates are rare. However, the period and region of origin can often be deduced from the forms of individual letters and numbers, the style of writing, ornamentation and the shape of the amulets.

### Magical literature

As regards the magical literature, the most influential medieval text is the *Shams al-Ma'ārif* written by the well-known writer on the occult, Abū'l 'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn Yūsuf al-Būnī (d.1225). He wrote three versions of varying length, but it is the *Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā* that was to be the most widely used. This treatise in 40 chapters, which draws on Hellenistic, Jewish and other pre-Islamic practices, concentrates in large part on the Names of God and their magical properties, and in particular on elaborate magic squares made up of the numerical value of the Names of God. It also contains charms using the so-called 'lunette script' (see below). Copied and used throughout the Islamic world, the influence of this text is still in evidence in contemporary West Africa (Hamès 1993). There is a vast

literature on al-Būnī: see in particular Dietrich, 'al-Būnī', EI<sup>2</sup>; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 65ff.; Lory 1986; Lory 1989).

The modern scholarly literature on magic and Islam is extensive. For a survey of the state of the subject see Emilie Savage-Smith's introduction to her *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (Savage-Smith 2004). There are important articles in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*: Fahd, 'Sihr'; Ruska and Carra de Vaux, 'Tilsam'; Fahd, 'Nīrandj'; MacDonald, 'Sīmiya' (all EI<sup>2</sup>). In terms of conveying the use of magic in Islamic societies, Doutté's *Magie et religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* and Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* still offer many valuable insights (Doutté 1909; Lane 1981).

### Inscriptions on amulets

Broadly, the inscriptions on amulets, whatever their age and whether in positive or negative, range from legible inscriptions at one end of the scale, which include verses from the Qur'ān, the Names of God and pious phrases and invocations, to esoteric signs, mysterious symbols and magic squares at the other. As we saw above with the seals, many of the phrases belong to a general repertoire of protective phrases found in numerous contexts, such as in architecture or metalwork, while the signs and symbols also appear on 'magical' objects, such as magic-medicinal bowls, talismanic shirts and so on. (For Qur'ānic verses in architecture: see Dodd 1981; 'talismanic' phrases in Ottoman architecture in Yemen, Giunta 2002; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1.)

### The importance of the Qur'ān on amulets

Besides the *basmala* and the *shahāda*, the inscriptions that appear the most frequently on the British Museum amulets and elsewhere are undoubtedly verses from the Qur'ān, whether in the form of complete verses, phrases or single words. For the Qur'ān itself is regarded as the highest form of protection for Muslims: 'the most esteemed of all "hegābs" (or charms) is a "mus-haf" [copy of the Qur'ān] (Canaan 1937: 72ff.; Donaldson 1937; Lane 1981: 249; Hamès 1997 and 2001). It has been described as a vast reservoir of power that can be channelled to satisfy every human need (Hamès 2001: 95). Words from the opening chapter of the Qur'ān, the *Fātiḥa* (*al-ḥamdu lillāh rabb al-ʿālimīn*), were used from the time of the Prophet in oral incantations against the evil eye and for healing (Hamès 1997: 130f.). Particular verses are seen as having special powers in particular situations. While it is often difficult to establish now for what purpose a particular amulet was created, it is clear that, for example, ones which contain the word *shafaya* to heal (see **Cat. 127**) were used for curing sickness; those with the 'victory verse' (Qur'ān 61:13) were for help in battle; and so on. The verse that appears the most frequently on amulets is Qur'ān 2:255, the 'throne verse', known also as the 'verse of seeking refuge' or the 'verse for driving out Satan' (Canaan 1937: 75). The short *sūras* known as the 'four declarations', *sūras* 109, 112, 113 and 114, are also favoured, while the last two *sūras*, 113 and 114, are additionally known as '*al-mu'awwidhatān*', the verses of 'seeking refuge from evil', and they provided 'the antidote to superstition and fear' (Ali 1976: 960). The Prophet was said to have used these verses when suffering from bewitchment (Canaan 1937: 75). It also appears that these verses were particularly favoured among the Shī'a, perhaps stemming from

the tradition that Imām Ḥusayn apparently wore these two *sūras* around his neck before he was martyred (Donaldson 1937: 257–8; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 61, Table 1).

### The 'Names of God' (Table 5)

Reference is made in the Qur'ān to the Names of God, which are described in a number of *sūras* as the '*asmā' al-ḥusnā*', 'the Beautiful Names'. 'There is no God but He, to Him belong the most beautiful names' (Qur'ān 20:8 and elsewhere). Traditionally they are known as 'the ninety-nine names'; a well-known *Ḥadīth* attributed to Abū Hurayra stated that 'God has ninety-nine names, one hundred less one, and whoever enumerates them shall enter paradise' (Gardet, 'al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā', EI<sup>2</sup>). As Redhouse (1880) discovered, however, there were in fact closer to 500 names, and at various times selections amounting to 99 were made by various authorities. The *subḥa* (rosary), which has 99 beads divided into three groups of 33, is used by Muslims to meditate on the names in their prayers. The names fall into a number of groups, and the usual order starts with the first fourteen (from Allāh to *al-muṣawwir*), which are enumerated in Qur'ān 59:22–4. Then follow names which are grouped according to euphony or use different, Arabic roots to express different – sometimes opposite – meanings. The usual order of the Names is set out by Gardet ('al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā', EI<sup>2</sup>), and his translations have also been basically followed here.

The Names of God feature largely in the work of al-Būnī, who devotes an entire section of the *Shams al-Ma'ārif* to a discussion of them, and in particular to the 'Greatest Name' (*ism al-a'zam*). Al-Būnī wrote in addition a separate treatise on the magical uses of the Names (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 66, no. 22). The Names are frequently referred to by their numerical value in magic squares, as shown in **Cat. A117**.

Some amulets feature the Names of God in their entirety (**Cat. A1, A2**; Kalus 1981: 74–5); while **Cat. A1** has the most common 99 of the Names of God, **Cat. A2** differs slightly, with the omission of *al-hādī* and *al-mu'izz* and the inclusion of *al-mu'tīn* and *al-mu'tī*. Otherwise, one or two Names of God may appear combined with other phrases. It is clear that some Names were more popular than others, such as *ghaffār* ('Pardoner') and *ḥāfiẓ* ('Guardian') (**Cat. A87, A33**), the latter noted by Redhouse (1888: 21, no. 85) as 'often employed as a written preservative, spell or charm, on houses etc. against danger of every kind'. (The appearance of the names on amulets is discussed in Doutté 1909: 200–3; Canaan 1937: 79–81; Kalus 1981: 74–6, based on Marqués-Rivière 1972: 130–2; Ruska and Carra de Vaux, 'Tilsam', EI<sup>2</sup>).

### Arrangement of this part of the catalogue

The amulets are grouped according to the content of the inscriptions, with separate categories for gold amulets, dated amulets, and brass amulets inscribed in negative. For collections of associated material, see Kalus 1981: sect. III.1: 70–90; Kalus 1986: sect. II: 47–93; Content 1987: 315–32; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1. The translations of the Qur'ānic inscriptions are based on Jones 2007.

### Note

- 1 I am grateful to Dr Hans Kind for his help with this topic within this section.





Chalcedony amulet with Qur'anic inscriptions (Cat. A14, Sloane amulet 9) 58 x 46 x 7.5 mm

**Table 4: The Abjad System**

<i>alif</i>	1
<i>bā'</i>	2
<i>jīm</i>	3
<i>dāl</i>	4
<i>hā'</i>	5
<i>wāw</i>	6
<i>zayn</i>	7
<i>hā'</i>	8
<i>ṭā'</i>	9
<i>yā'</i>	10
<i>kāf</i>	20
<i>lām</i>	30
<i>mīm</i>	40
<i>nūn</i>	50
<i>sīn</i>	60
<i>ʿayn</i>	70
<i>fā'</i>	80
<i>ṣād</i>	90
<i>qāf</i>	100
<i>rā'</i>	200
<i>shīn</i>	300
<i>tā'</i>	400
<i>thā'</i>	500
<i>khā'</i>	600
<i>dhal</i>	700
<i>ḍād</i>	800
<i>zā'</i>	900
<i>ghayn</i>	1000

**Table 5: The Names of God**

			<i>Abjad value</i>
1	God	<i>Allāh</i>	66
2	The Compassionate	<i>al-raḥmān</i>	299
3	The Merciful	<i>al-raḥīm</i>	258
4	The King	<i>al-malik</i>	90
5	The Most Holy	<i>al-quddūs</i>	170
6	The Peace	<i>al-salām</i>	131
7	The Believer	<i>al-mu'min</i>	136
8	The Vigilant One	<i>al-muḥaymin</i>	145
9	The Most Mighty	<i>al-'azīz</i>	94
10	The Very Strong	<i>al-jabbār</i>	206
11	The Haughty	<i>al-mutakabbir</i>	662
12	The Creator	<i>al-khāliq</i>	731
13	The Producer	<i>al-bārī'</i>	213
14	The Organiser	<i>al-muṣawwir</i>	336
15	The Pardoner	<i>al-ghaffār</i>	1281
16	The Dominator	<i>al-qahhār</i>	306
17	The Constant Giver	<i>al-wahhāb</i>	14
18	The Dispenser of All Good	<i>al-razzāq</i>	308
19	The Victorious	<i>al-fatāḥ</i>	489
20	The Omniscient	<i>al-'alīm</i>	150
21	The Restrainer	<i>al-qābiḍ</i>	903
22	The Outstretcher	<i>al-bāsiṭ</i>	72
23	The Abaser	<i>al-khāfiḍ</i>	1481
24	The Uplifter	<i>al-rāfi'</i>	351
25	The Raiser to Honour	<i>al-mu'izz</i>	117
26	The Degradator	<i>al-mudhill</i>	770
27	The Hearer	<i>al-samī'</i>	180
28	The All-Seeing	<i>al-baṣīr</i>	302
29	The Judge	<i>al-ḥakam</i>	68
30	The Just	<i>al-'adl</i>	104
31	The Benevolent	<i>al-laṭīf</i>	129
32	The All-Knowing	<i>al-khabīr</i>	812
33	The Slow to Anger	<i>al-ḥalīm</i>	88
34	The Supreme	<i>al-'azīm</i>	1020
35	The Forgiver	<i>al-ghafūr</i>	1286
36	The Grateful	<i>al-shakūr</i>	528
37	The High	<i>al-'alī</i>	110
38	The Great	<i>al-kabīr</i>	232
39	The Guardian	<i>al-ḥafīẓ</i>	998
40	The Nourisher	<i>al-muqīt</i>	550
41	The Reckoner	<i>al-ḥasīb</i>	80
42	The Sublime	<i>al-jalīl</i>	72
43	The Generous	<i>al-karīm</i>	370
44	The Watchful	<i>al-raqīb</i>	312
45	The Assenter	<i>al-mujīb</i>	55
46	The Far-Reaching	<i>al-wāsi'</i>	137
47	The Wise	<i>al-ḥakīm</i>	78
48	The Affectionate	<i>al-wadūd</i>	20
49	The Most Glorious	<i>al-majīd</i>	57
50	The Revivifier	<i>al-bā'ith</i>	573
51	The Witness	<i>al-shahīd</i>	319
52	The Truth	<i>al-ḥaqq</i>	108
53	The Trustee	<i>al-wakīl</i>	66
54	The Strong	<i>al-qawī</i>	16
55	The Firm	<i>al-matīn</i>	500
56	The Protector	<i>al-walī</i>	46
57	The Praise worthy	<i>al-ḥamīd</i>	62
58	The Numberer	<i>al-muḥṣī</i>	148
59	The Originator	<i>al-mubdī</i>	56
60	The Revealer	<i>al-mu'īd</i>	124



<i>Table 5: The Names of God</i>			<i>Abjad value</i>
61	The Creator of Life	<i>al-muhyī</i>	68
62	The Causer of Death	<i>al-mumīt</i>	490
63	The Living	<i>al-ḥayy</i>	28
64	The Everlasting	<i>al-qayyūm</i>	156
65	The Perceiver	<i>al-wājid</i>	14
66	The Glorious	<i>al-mājid</i>	48
67	The Only One	<i>al-aḥad (al-wāḥid)</i>	13/14
68	The Eternal	<i>al-ṣamad</i>	134
69	The Able	<i>al-qādir</i>	305
70	The Powerful	<i>al-muqtadir</i>	774
71	The Advancer	<i>al-muqaddim</i>	184
72	The Postponer	<i>al-mu'akkhir</i>	846
73	The First	<i>al-awwal</i>	37
74	The Last	<i>al-ākhir</i>	801
75	The Visible	<i>al-ẓāhir</i>	1106
76	The Latent	<i>al-bāṭin</i>	62
77	The Helper	<i>al-wālī</i>	46
78	The Exalted	<i>al-muta'ālī</i>	551
79	The Righteous	<i>al-barr</i>	502
80	The Forgiving	<i>al-tawwāb</i>	409
81	The Avenger	<i>al-muntaqim</i>	630
82	The Pardoner	<i>al-'afū</i>	156
83	The Most Indulgent	<i>al-ra'ūf</i>	292
84	The Master of the Kingdom	<i>mālik al-mulk</i>	212
85	The Possessor of Glory and Generosity	<i>dhū 'l-jalāl wa 'l-ikrām</i>	1110
86	The Just Distributor	<i>al-muqṣiṭ</i>	209
87	The Uniter	<i>al-jāmi'</i>	114
88	The Independent	<i>al-ghanī</i>	1060
89	The Enricher	<i>al-mughnī</i>	1100
90	The Preventer	<i>al-māni'</i>	161
91	The Harmer	<i>al-dārr</i>	1001
92	The Beneficial One	<i>al-nāfi'</i>	201
93	The Light	<i>al-nūr</i>	256
94	The Guide	<i>al-hādī</i>	20
95	The Incomparable	<i>al-badī'</i>	86
96	The Enduring One	<i>al-bāqī</i>	113
97	The Inheritor	<i>al-wārith</i>	707
98	The Leader	<i>al-rashīd</i>	514
99	The Patient	<i>al-ṣabūr</i>	298

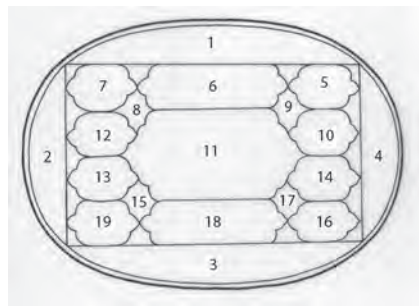
*Table 6: The Fourteen Immaculates*

Name	Epithet	Translated Epithet	Date of Death	Place of Death/Burial
Muḥammad	<i>al-muṣṭafā</i>	The Chosen	10/632	Medina
Fāṭima bint Muḥammad	<i>al-batūl</i>	The Virgin	11/632	Medina
‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib	<i>al-murtaḍā</i>	The Accepted	40/661	Kufa/Najaf
al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī	<i>al-sabitayn</i>	The two Gentle Ones	49/669	Medina
al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī			61/680	Karbala
‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn	<i>zayn al-‘ābidīn</i>	The Ornament of the Servants (of God)	95/714	Medina
Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī	<i>al-bāqir</i>	The Great	115/733	Medina
Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad	<i>al-ṣādiq</i>	The Just	148/765	Medina
Mūsā ibn Ja‘far	<i>al-kāzīm</i>	The Silent	183/799	Baghdad
‘Alī ibn Mūsā	<i>al-riḍā</i>	The Pleasing	203/818	Mashhad
Muḥammad Jawād ibn ‘Alī	<i>al-taqī</i>	The Pious	220/835	Baghdad
‘Alī al-Hādī ibn Muḥammad	<i>al-naqī</i>	The Pure	254/868	Samarra
al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī	<i>al-zakī al-‘askarī</i>	The Virtuous the Soldier	260/874	Samarra
Muḥammad al-Mahdī	<i>al-imām al-humām</i>	The High-minded Imam	(occultation) 329/940	

## 9. Catalogue of Amulets

### 'Names of God'

A1



Chalcedony, yellow. Straight-sided oval, flat with slightly hollowed base. The inscription is in cursive script, and the layout of the 'Names of God' and other inscriptions is represented by the diagram above.

1. هو الله الذي لا اله الا هو يا رحمن يا رحيم يا ملك يا قدوس يا سلام يا مؤمن يامهمين يا عزيز
2. يا جبار يا متكبر يا خالق يا باري يامصور يا غفار يا قهار
3. يا وهاب يا رزاق يا فتاح يا عليم يا قابض يا باسط يا خافض يا رافع يا معز يا مذل
4. يا عدل يا سميع يا بصير يا حكم يا لطيف يا شكور يا علي
5. يا حسيب يا مقبب يا حفيظ يا كبير
6. يا جليل يا خبير يا حلیم يا عظيم يا غفور يا كريم يا رقيب يا مجيب يا واسع يا حكيم يا ودود
7. يا حق يا شهيد يا باعث يا مجيد
8. يا وكيل
9. يا قوي
10. يا حميد يا متين يا ولي
11. يا محصى يا مبدى يا معيد يا محي يا مميت يا حي يا قيوم يا واعد يا ماجد يا واحد يا صمد يا قادر يا مقدم يا مقتدر يا مؤخر يا اول يا آخر يا ظاهر يا باطن يا والي يا متعالى يا بر يا ثواب يا منتقم

12. يا جامع يا عفو يا رؤف
13. يا مالك الملك ذا الجلال
14. والاکرام يا غني يا ضار
15. يا مقسط
16. يامغني يامانع يا نور
17. يا نافع
18. يا هادي يا بديع يا باقي يا وارث يا رشيد يا صبور
19. يا امام حسن يا امام حسين يا بدوح (ع)

1. He is God of whom there is no god but He, O Compassionate (*rahmān*), O Merciful (*rahīm*), O King (*malik*), O Most Holy (*quddūs*), O Peace (*salām*), O Believer (*mu'min*), O Vigilant One (*muḥaymin*), O Most Mighty ('*azīz*)
2. O Very Strong (*jabbār*), O Haughty (*mutakabbir*), O Creator (*khāliq*), O Producer (*bāri*'), O Organiser (*muṣawwir*), O Pardoner (*ghaffār*), O Dominator (*qahhār*)
3. O Constant Giver (*wahhāb*), O Dispenser of All Good (*razzāq*), O Victorious (*fattāḥ*), O Omniscient ('*alīm*), O Restrainer (*qābiḍ*), O Outstretcher (*bāsīt*), O Abaser (*khāfiḍ*), O Uplifter (*rāfi*'), O Raiser to Honour (*mu'izz*), O Degradier (*mudhill*)
4. O Just ('*adl*), O Hearer (*samī*'), O All-Seeing (*baṣīr*), O Judge (*ḥakam*), O Benevolent (*latīf*), O Grateful (*shakūr*), O Most High ('*alī*)
5. O Reckoner (*ḥasīb*), O Nourisher (*muqīt*), O Guardian (*ḥafīẓ*), O Great (*kabīr*)
6. O Sublime (*jalīl*), O All-Knowing (*khābīr*), O Slow to Anger (*ḥalīm*), O Supreme ('*aẓīm*), O Forgiver (*ghafūr*), O Generous (*karīm*), O Watchful (*raqīb*), O Assenter (*mujiḅ*), O Far-Reaching (*wāsi*'), O Wise (*ḥakīm*), O Affectionate (*wadūd*)
7. O Truth (*ḥaqq*), O Witness (*shahīd*), O Revivifier (*bā'ith*), O Most Glorious (*majīd*)
8. O Trustee (*wakīl*)
9. O Strong (*qawī*)
10. O Praiseworthy (*ḥamīd*), O Firm (*matīn*), O Protector (*walī*)
11. O Numberer (*muḥṣī*), O Originator (*mubdī*), O Revealer (*mu'īd*), O Creator of life (*muḥyī*), O Causer of Death (*mumīt*), O Living (*ḥayy*), O Everlasting (*qayyūm*), O Perceiver (*wājid*), O Glorious (*mājid*), O Only One (*wāḥid*), O Eternal (*ṣamad*), O Able (*qādir*), O Advancer (*muqaddim*), O Powerful (*muqtadir*), O Postponer (*mu'akkhkhir*)
12. O Uniter (*jāmi*'), O Pardoner ('*afū*), O Most Indulgent (*ra'ūf*)
13. O Master of the Kingdom (*mālik al-mulk*), Possessor of Glory

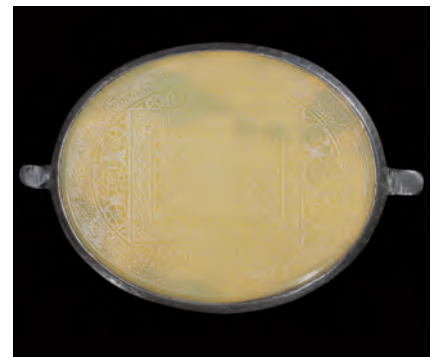
14. and Generosity (*dhā al-jalāl*), wa al-ikrām), O Independent (*ghanī*), O Harmer (*dār*)
15. O Just Distributor (*muqsit*)
16. O Enricher (*mughnī*), O Preventer (*māni*'), O Light (*nūr*)
17. O Beneficial One (*nāfi*')
18. O Guide (*hādī*), O Incomparable (*badī*'), O Enduring One (*bāqī*), O Inheritor (*wārith*), O Leader (*rashīd*), O Patient (*ṣabūr*)
19. O Imam Ḥasan O Imam Ḥusayn O *Budūh* (?)

There are 99 Names of God, from Allāh to Ṣabūr, inscribed here, and invocations to Imams Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, indicating that this is a Shī'a amulet. The final invocation is unclear; it may be *yā budu*, O Manifest One, or *yā budūh* with the letter *ḥā* appearing attached to another letter. *Budūh* is the 3 × 3 magic square, the very name of which was assigned talismanic properties and is known to occur on amulets along with the Names of God (see below, **Cat. A117**; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 107; Canaan 1937: 92; Macdonald, 'Budūh', EI<sup>2</sup>; and see p. 170 for a discussion of magic squares). The order here of the Names basically follows the sequence in Gardet ('al-Asmā' al-ḥusnā', EI<sup>2</sup>) and in **Table 5**.

An amulet in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kalus 1981: 74–6) is similar in terms of the arrangement of the names and the style of script, with some differences in the placing of the names. In the Bibliothèque Nationale example, however, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn are not included.

28 × 40 × 3.5 mm  
1867 12–19 1

A2



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a silver mount, part of a necklace or arm band. Cursive inscription in a central square divided into lozenges of equal size and in margin around the edge. Between the square and the circle is a border of flowers. On both of the central flowers on each side are the numerals 1115 on one side and 111 5 111 with further numerals 100 in the petal above. The significance of these is at present unclear. (See p. 133 for enlargement of this seal.)



## Inner margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

## Outer margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم امن الرسول بما  
انزل اليه من ربه والمؤمنون كل امن بالله  
وملائكته وكتبه ورسله لا تفرق بين احد  
من رسله وقالوا سمعنا واطعنا غفرانك  
ربنا واليك المصير / لا يكلف الله نفسا الا  
وسعها لها ما كسبت وعليها ما اكتسبت  
ربنا لا تؤاخذنا ان نسينا او اخطأنا ربنا  
ولا تحمل علينا اصرا كما حملته على  
الذين من قبلنا ربنا ولا تحملنا ما لا طاقة  
لنا به واعف عنا واغفر لنا وارحمنا انت  
مولانا فانصرنا على القوم الكافرين /  
يافتاح

## Centre square

1. يا الله يا رحمن يا رحيم يا ملك يا  
قدوس يا سلام يا مؤمن يا مهيمن يا  
عزيز يا جبار
2. يا متكبر يا خالق يا بارئ يا مصور يا  
غفار يا قهار يا وهاب يا رزاق يا فتاح
3. يا علیم يا قابض يا باسط يا خافض يا  
رافع يا وسيع يا مذل يا سميع يا بصير يا  
حكيم
4. يا عدل يا لطيف يا خبير يا حلیم  
يا عظیم يا غفور يا شكور يا علي يا  
كبير
5. يا حفيظ يا مقيت يا حسيب يا  
جليل يا كريم يا رقيب يا مجيب يا  
واسع يا حكم يا ودود
6. يا مجيد يا باعث يا شهيد يا حق و يا  
وكيل يا قوي ويا متين يا ولي ويا حميد
7. يا محصي [يا] مبدی يا معید يا محي  
ويا مميت ويا حي يا قيوم ويا واعد يا  
ماجد ويا واحد
8. ويا احد ويا صمد يا قادر يا مقتدر يا  
مقدم يا مؤخر يا اول يا آخر يا ظاهر
9. يا باطن يا والي يا متعالي يا بر يا  
تواب ويا معين ويا منتقم ويا عفو يا رؤف  
[sic] ويا رب
10. يا مالك الملك ذو الجلال والاكرام يا  
مقسط يا جامع يا غني يا مغني
11. يا معطي يا مانع يا ضار يا نافع يا  
نور يا بديع يا باقي يا وارث يا صبور يا  
رشيد

Inner margin: *Basmala*. God. There is no  
god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting,  
Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor  
sleep. His are all things in the heavens  
and on earth. Who is there who intercedes

with Him, save by His permission? He  
knows what is before them and what is  
after them, while they encompass none  
of His knowledge apart from that which  
He wishes. His throne extends over the  
heavens and the earth, and He is not tired  
by guarding them. He is the Exalted and the  
Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

Outer margin: *Basmala*. The Messenger  
believes in what was sent down to him  
from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each  
one (of them) believes in God, His angels,  
His books and His messengers. We make  
no distinction (they say) between one and  
another of His messengers. And they say  
'We hear, and we obey: (we seek) your  
forgiveness our Lord, and to You is the  
end of all journeys. / On no soul does God  
place a burden greater than it can bear. It  
gets every good that it earns, and it suffers  
every ill that it earns. Our Lord condemn  
us not if we forget or fall into error; our  
Lord lay on us not a burden like that which  
You laid on those before us; our Lord lay  
not on us a greater burden than we have  
strength to bear. Blot out our sins, and grant  
us forgiveness, have mercy upon us. You  
are our protector, help us against those who  
stand against faith. O Conqueror (*fattāḥ*)

Apart from the last two words, this  
inscription cites Qur'ān 2:285–286.

Centre square: Small lozenges, each  
containing one of the Names of God.

1. O God O Compassionate (*rahmān*),  
O Merciful (*rahīm*), O King (*malik*),  
O Most Holy (*quddūs*), O Peace (*salām*),  
O Believer (*mu'min*), O Vigilant One  
(*muhaymin*), O Most Mighty ('*azīz*),  
O Very Strong (*jabbār*),
2. O Haughty (*mutakabbir*), O Creator  
(*khāliq*), O Producer (*bārī*'), O Organiser  
(*muṣawwir*), O Pardoner (*ghaffār*),  
O Dominator (*qahhār*), O Constant Giver  
(*wahhāb*), O Dispenser of All Good  
(*razzāq*), O Victorious (*fattāḥ*)
3. O Omniscient ('*alīm*), O Restrainer  
(*qābid*), O Outstretcher (*bāsiṭ*), O Abaser  
(*khāfid*), O Uplifter (*rāfi*'), O Far-Reaching  
(*wasī*'), O Degradator (*mudhill*), O Hearer  
(*samī*'), O All-Seeing (*baṣīr*), O Wise  
(*ḥakīm*)
4. O Just ('*adl*), O Benevolent (*latīf*),  
O All-Knowing (*khābīr*), O Slow to Anger  
(*ḥalīm*), O Supreme ('*azīm*), O Forgiver  
(*ghafūr*), O Grateful (*shakūr*), O Most High  
(*alī*), O Great (*kabīr*)
5. and O Guardian (*ḥafīẓ*), O Nourisher  
(*muqīt*), O Reckoner (*ḥasīb*), O Sublime  
(*jalīl*), O Generous (*karīm*), O Watchful  
(*raqīb*), O Assenter (*muḥīb*), O Far-  
Reaching (*wāsi*'), O Judge (*ḥakam*),  
O Affectionate (*wadūd*)
6. O Most Glorious (*majīd*), O Revivifier  
(*bā'ith*), O Witness (*shahīd*), O Truth  
(*ḥaqq*), O Trustee (*wakīl*), O Strong (*qawī*),  
O Firm (*matīn*), O Protector (*walī*),  
O Praiseworthy (*ḥamīd*)

7. O Numberer (*muḥṣī*), O Originator  
(*mubdī*), O Revealer (*mu'id*), O Creator of  
Life (*muḥyī*), O Causer of Death (*umūt*),  
O Living (*ḥayy*), O Everlasting (*qayyūm*),  
O Perceiver (*wājid*), O Glorious (*mājid*),  
O Only One (*wāḥid*)
8. O One (*aḥad*), O Eternal (*ṣamad*),  
O Able (*qādir*), O Powerful (*muqtadir*),  
O Advancer (*muqaddim*), O Postponer  
(*mu'akkhir*) O First (*awwal*), O Last  
(*ākhir*), O Visible (*ẓāhir*)
9. O Hidden (*bāṭin*), O Helper (*wālī*),  
O Exalted (*muta'ālī*), O Righteous (*barr*),  
O Forgiving (*tawwāb*), O Aider (*mu'in*),  
O Avenger (*muntaqim*), O Pardoner ('*afī*'),  
O Most Indulgent (*ra'uf*) [*sic*], O Lord  
(*rabb*)
10. O Master of the Kingdom (*mālik  
al-mulk*), Possessor of Glory and  
Generosity (*dhū 'l-al-jalāl wa 'l-ikrām*),  
O Just Distributor (*muqṣit*), O Uniter  
(*jāmi*'), O Independent (*ghanī*), O Enricher  
(*al-mughnī*)
11. O Giver (*mu'tī*), O Preventer (*māni*'),  
O Harmer (*dārr*), O Beneficial One (*nāfi*'),  
O Light (*nūr*), O Incomparable (*badī*'),  
O Enduring One (*bāqī*), O Inheritor  
(*wārith*), O Patient (*sabūr*), O Leader  
(*rashīd*)

48 × 39 × 9 mm  
1893 2–5 110

The *basmala* and the *shahāda*

For discussion and seals with these  
inscriptions, see p. 61 ff.

## A3



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval flat top and  
base with bevelled sides. Cut down. Cursive  
inscription in concentric bands alternating  
with band of cross motifs.

## Outer band

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا اله الا الله

## Centre

محمد نبي الله

Outer band: *Basmala*. The beginning of the  
*shahāda*. Only the *lām-alif* is visible.

Centre: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God

21 × 17 × 2.5 mm  
1943 10–9 7. Godwin-Austen collection

A4



Chalcedony, yellow and white. Oval, slightly convex top and flattish base with straight sides. Cursive inscription, large-scale with thick strokes in the centre against a hatched ground, and smaller-scale around the margin.

Centre

يا الله

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

Centre: O God

Margin: *Basmala*. There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Prophet of God (*shahāda*)

30 × 19 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 5. Christy collection

A5



Agate, brown and white. Oval, flattish top and convex base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions in careless script, in the centre large-scale with thick strokes against a hatched ground. Smaller-scale inscription around the margin.

Centre

يا الله

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

Centre: O God

Margin: *Basmala*. There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Prophet of God (*shahāda*)

25 × 18 × 9 mm

OA+ 11430

A6



Carnelian, variegated orange. Flat at the top with curved-in bevelled sides; the surface is slightly convex. The base is flat. Deeply carved angular-cursive inscription.

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God (*shahāda*)

32 × 26 × 5 mm

OA+ 11451

A7



Carnelian, banded orange. Oval, flat top and concave base with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Scratched cursive inscription on three lines in *nasta'liq*. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

Lines 1–3: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God (*shahāda*)

21 × 14 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 40. Christy collection

A8



Obsidian. Rectangular with rounded ends; a projection at the top with a hole for suspension. Scratched cursive inscription on two sides.

Side A

1. لا اله الا الله  
2. محمد  
3. الملك الحق

Side B

الملك الله

Side A:

1. There is no god but God  
2. Muḥammad  
3. The King the Truth

Side B: The Kingdom belongs to God

There are possibly traces of the word *rasūl* above *al-haqq*, completing the *shahāda*. *Al-malik* and *al-haqq* are two of the Names of God.

4 × 33 × 26 mm

1837 4–13 132



A9



Rock crystal. Three-dimensional lozenge shape with a hole for suspension. Engraved with a single word repeated five times in simple angular style.

العال [sic]

Al-‘Āl[ī?]

This may be *al-‘ālī*, the Highest, one of the Names of God. Alternatively, a reading of *yā Allāh* is possible.

35 × 20 × 15 mm (max.)

2003 10–21 2. Presented by Bernard MacEvoy

### Verses from the Qur’ān

A10



Cowrie shell (aragonite, gastropod). Inscribed in angular script with forked terminals.

الا هو الحي

Except He the living

The citation is a fragment from Qur’ān 2:255. Cowrie shells have traditionally been used in the Islamic world for protection and divination in addition to their use as currency (Hunwick and Regourd, ‘Wada’, EI<sup>2</sup>). It is possible that this may have been part of a set and worn as a necklace.

14 × 10 mm (max.)

1861 6–28 34

A11



Black limestone pebble. Oval with a hole at either end. Inscribed on both sides in simple angular script. The words are joined together in continuous lines, six lines per side.

Side A

الله لا اله الا هو الحي  
القيوم لا تاخذه سنة  
ولا نوم له ما في السموات  
وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده  
الا باذنه يعلم

Side B

ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم  
ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه  
الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه  
السموات والارض ولا يؤده  
حفظهما وهو العلي  
العظيم

Side A: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows

Side B: what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which

He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

24 × 18.5 × 7 mm  
OA+ 13499

## A12



Sardonyx, brown and white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into sections by the returns of the two *yās* of *fī* and *al-'alī* and the extension of the '*ayn* of *ya'lam*. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

29 × 24 × 4 mm  
1893 2–5 109

## A13



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base. The inscription in cursive script is inscribed in relief. The seven lines are underlined by creating returns out of some of the final letters.

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

32 × 21 × 4 mm  
1894 5–20 12

## A14



Chalcedony, brown and white. Heart-shaped, flat top and base with straight sides. The inscription, arranged in concentric bands following the shape of the stone, is incised and etched white with a background of clusters of dots and dashes.

Centre

لا اله الا الله  
محمد  
رسول الله

Inner margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Outer margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم / محمد المنتقي على الله يا قاضي الحاجات

Centre: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God (*shahāda*)

Inner margin: Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

Outer margin: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255) Muḥammad, devout unto God, O granter of needs

58 × 46 × 7.5 mm  
Sloane amulet 9

## A15



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions, large-scale in the centre, reserved against a hatched ground, and smaller-scale in two rows around the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

و يسبح الرعد بحمده والملائكة من خيفته

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

Centre: The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)

Margin: *Basmala*. God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes



with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

41 × 26 × 3 mm  
Sloane amulet 6

A16



Chalcedony, brown and white. Heart-shaped, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions, large scale in the the centre reserved against a hatched ground, and smaller scale in two rows around the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

ويسبح الرعد بحمده والملائكة من خيفته

Margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم/ يا غفار

Centre: The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)

Margin: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)  
O forgiver

46 × 32 × 5 mm  
Sloane amulet 8

A17



Chalcedony, white. Heart-shaped, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions, large-scale with thick strokes in the centre against a hatched ground with scattered flowers and dots, and smaller-scale in two rows around the margin.

Centre

محمد نبي الله

Margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

Centre: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God

Margin: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

38 × 34 × 6 mm  
Sloane amulet 3

A18



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with high straight sides. Cursive inscriptions: in the centre in a thick script against a hatched ground with flowers and scrolls, with an inscription inside it in a style resembling *gulzār* (Safadi 1978: 31). Smaller-scale script around the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

يا محمد

Within it

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وان يكاد الذين كفروا ليزلقونك بابصارهم لما سمعوا الذكر ويقولون انه لمجنون وما هو الا ذكر للعالمين

Margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

Centre: O Muḥammad

Within the word Muḥammad: *Basmala*.

Those who are ungrateful almost disconcert you with their glances when they have heard the reminder. They say 'He is possessed'. It is nothing but a reminder for all beings (Qur'ān 68:51–2)

Margin: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

40 × 30 × 4 mm  
Sloane amulet 14

A19



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription with background of spiralling stems and clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

يسبح الرعد بحمده والملائكة من خيفته

The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)

24 × 15 × 6 mm  
Sloane amulet 7

A20



Chalcedony, pale brown and white. Oval, slightly convex top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription reserved against a hatched ground. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

يسبح الرعد بحمده والملائكة من خيفته

The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)

25 × 20 × 5.5 mm  
OA+ 1366

A21



Agate, brown. Octagonal, with slightly convex top and flat base with straight sides. Cursive inscription divided into sections by the extensions of the tā's of *anta* and *kuntu*.

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been one of the wrong-doers (Qur'ān 21:87)

23 × 20 × 4 mm  
1943 10–9 11. Godwin-Austen collection

A22



Chalcedony, white–pale brown. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a bronze ring. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the yā' of *innī*. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been one of the wrong-doers (Qur'ān 21:87)

25 × 19 × 5 mm  
Sloane amulet 21

A23



Sard. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription with thick strokes against a hatched ground, divided into two sections by the return of the yā' of *innī*.

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been one of the wrong-doers (Qur'ān 21:87)

26 × 17 × 3 mm  
OA+ 13932

A24



Serpentine, pale green. Plaque with cursive inscription, background of dashes and crosses.

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been one of the wrong-doers (Qur'ān 21:87)

61 × 50 × 5 mm  
1890 11–10 5

A25



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, two lines in the central oval and around the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

محمد نبي الله علي ولي الله

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم انا اعطيتناك الكوثر فصل لربك وانحر ان شانئك هو الابتر

Centre: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God 'Alī is the friend of God

Margin: *Basmala*. We have indeed given you abundance. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice. The one who hates you is the one cut off (Qur'ān 108)

24 × 18 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 38. Christy collection



A26



Chalcedony, pale yellow. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche and with a background of dots and stars. It is divided into sections by the extensions of the *bā'* of *bism* and the *hā'* of *aḥad*.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
*Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

29 × 22 × 3 mm  
1866 12–29 84. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 7, no. 2)

A27



Chalcedony, pale brown. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription with thick strokes reserved in white against a hatched ground. It is divided into sections by the extensions of the *hā'*s of the two *aḥads*. Single line around the edge of the stone.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
*Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

35 × 28 × 6 mm  
1853 3–28 1. Auckland collection

A28



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. The words *yā Muḥammad* have an inscription inside them. The style is akin to *gulzār* script, where figural scenes are sometimes found within the letters (Safadi 1978: 110). Double lines around the edge of the stone.

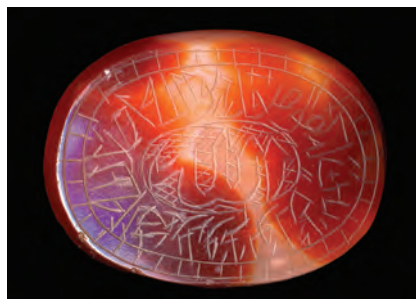
يا محمد

Within it  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
O Muḥammad

Within the word Muḥammad: *Basmala*.  
Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

26 × 22 × 5 mm  
Sloane amulet 10

A29



Carnelian, red-orange and white. Oval, slightly convex top and uneven base with straight slightly flaring sides. Cursive inscriptions, in a scratched careless style, in the centre against hatched ground and around the margin.

Centre

الله  
Margin  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
Centre: God  
Margin: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

40 × 30 × 9 mm  
OA+ 11450

A30



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions: large-scale with thick strokes in the centre against a hatched ground, and smaller-scale around the margin.

Centre

الله اكبر

Margin  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
Centre: God is great

Margin: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

33 × 24 × 5 mm  
1878 12–20 8. Christy collection

A31



Impure haematite, red-brown. Rectangular, flat with straight sides bevelled at the base. Cursive inscriptions in the centre (a crudely formed *nasta'liq*) and around the margin.

Centre

نصر من الله وفتح قريب

Margin  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد  
Centre: Help from God and a victory near (Qur'ān 61:13)

Margin: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

26 × 19 × 5 mm  
Sloane amulet 17

## A32



Chalcedony, pale brown. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription in the central oval and around the margin with a background of clusters of dots.

## Centre

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد

## Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل يا ايها الكافرون لا اعبد ما تعبدون ولا انتم عابدون ما اعبد ولا انا عابد ما عبدتم ولا انتم عابدون ما اعبد لكم دينكم ولي دين يا رافع الدرجات

Centre: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112)

Margin: *Basmala*. Say, 'O infidels, I do not serve (or worship) what your serve, nor do you serve what I serve, Nor are you the servants of what I serve. You have your religion and I have mine (Qur'ān 109) O You who lifts up the steps

39 × 32 × 5 mm  
1883 12–11 I

## A33



Carnelian, bright orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides set into a silver mount, part of necklace or arm band with silver foil underneath. Cursive inscription with a background of flowers and dots, in a central oval and around the margin. Single line around the edge of the stone.

## Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد نصر من الله وفتح قريب

## Central oval

وبشر المؤمنين فالله خير حافظا وهو الرحمن الرحيم يا حافظ

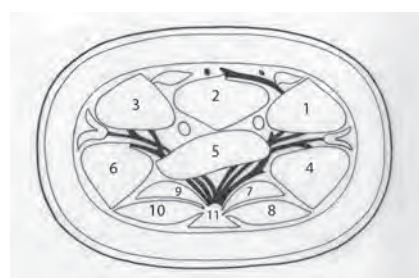
Margin: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112) Help from God and a victory near (Qur'ān 61:13)

## Central oval:

1. So give glad tidings to the believers (Qur'ān 61:13). And God is the best preserver (Qur'ān 12:64)  
2. And he is the Merciful, the Compassionate (Qur'ān 2:163). O Preserver (one of the Names of God)

36 × 30 × 9 mm  
OA+ 1334

## A34



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval with flat top and set into a silver mount with attached purple rope with tassels. The design in the central oval is in the form of a tree with inscriptions in the leaves against a hatched ground. Further inscriptions in the margin.

## Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل يا ايها الكافرون لا اعبد ما تعبدون ولا انتم عابدون ما اعبد ولا انا عابد ما عبدتم ولا انتم عابدون ما اعبد لكم دينكم ولي دين

## Centre

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم سلام هي حتى مطلع الفجر  
2. ويسبح الرعد بحمده والملائكة من خيفته

3. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم سلام على ياسين  
4. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم سلام على موسى وهرون  
5. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم نصر من الله وفتح قريب  
6. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم سلام على ابراهيم  
7. العزة لله  
8. ومن يتوكل على الله  
9. الله اكبر  
10. المتوكل على الله  
11. ياحي

Margin: *Basmala*. Say, He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him (Qur'ān 112) *Basmala*. Say, 'O infidels, I do not serve (or worship) what your serve, nor do you serve what I serve, Nor are you the servants of what I serve. You have your religion and I have mine'. (Qur'ān 109)

## Centre:

1. *Basmala*. Peace it is until the rising of the dawn (Qur'ān 97:5)  
2. The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)  
3. *Basmala*. Peace be upon the family of Yāsīn (Elijah) (Qur'ān 37:130)  
4. *Basmala*. Peace be on Moses and Aaron (Qur'ān 37:120)  
5. *Basmala*. Help from God and a victory near (Qur'ān 61:13)  
6. *Basmala*. Peace be upon Abraham (Qur'ān 37:109)  
7. Glory to God,  
8. and he who relies on God  
9. God is great  
10. The one who relies (on God) is for God  
11. O Living (Name of God *ḥayy*)

For comparable amulets see Kalus 1986: 69, no. II.1.41 and, particularly, 72, no. II.1.45; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 140.

52 × 35 mm (stone)

1923 2–3 1. Clarke–Thornhill, T B collection.

Register note: 'Obtained by donor from a Persian Armenian refugee in Egypt in 1898, a gem engraver, but not his work.'



A35



Chlorite, variegated green. Plaque with hole for suspension. Cursive inscription divided into two sections and within a border.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
قل اعوذ برب الناس  
ملك الناس اله الناس  
من شر الوسواس الخناس  
الذي يوسوس [في صدور الناس]

*Basmala.* Say, I seek refuge with the Lord of men. The King of men, the God of men, from the evil of a slinking whisperer, who whispers into the bosoms of men – of *jinn* and men (Qur'ān 114)

57 × 44 × 6 mm  
1890 11–10 4

### Short passages from the Qur'ān

A36



Chalcedony, now white, probably as a result of weathering or burial. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription within a cartouche.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3. As God wills, there is no power except in God (Qur'ān 18:39), I ask forgiveness of God

For seals inscribed with this Qur'ānic phrase, see *Cat.* 276.

10 × 8 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 35. Christy collection

A37



Carnelian, yellow–orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of cursive script.

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر الله

Lines 1–3. As God wills, there is no power except in God (Qur'ān 18:39), I ask forgiveness of God

11 × 10 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 33. Christy collection

A38



Carnelian, pale orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription, the script is divided into sections by the *alifs* of the three *Allāhs*, with cross designs and arrows in the corners. Single line around the edge of the seal.

ما شاء الله لا قوة الا بالله استغفر الله

As God wills, there is no power except in God (Qur'ān 18:39), I ask forgiveness of God

27 × 17 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 32. Christy collection

A39



Sard. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on three lines with a background of clusters of dots.

ما شاء الله لا قوة الا  
بالله ان ترن انا اقل منك ما  
لا و ولدا يا غافر

Lines 1–3. As God wills, there is no power except in God. If you think that I am inferior to you in wealth and children (Qur'ān 18:39), O Pardoner (one of the Names of God; occurs three times in the form of *al-ghaffār* in the Qur'ān 22:38; 5:39; 32:40)

27 × 20 × 0.5 mm  
OA+ 11433

A40



Carnelian, dark orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides set in a gold mount. The inscription is acid-etched. Three lines of cursive script separated by horizontal lines. A single line is around the edge of the seal.

ما شاء الله  
لا حول و لا قوة الا بالله  
العلي العظيم

1–3. As God wills, there is no power except through God. (Qur'ān 18:39), the Most High (*al-'alī*), the Supreme (*al-'azīm*) (two of the Names of God. In the Qur'ān the two often occur together, or *al-'alī* appears with *al-ḥakīm*, the Wise, or *al-kabīr*, the Great; *Concordance*: 592)

28 × 22 × 4 mm  
1987 11–19 2

A41



Carnelian, orange. Slightly convex top with straight sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche, the reading of which starts from the bottom right. The *yā* of *amrī* is at the end of the top line and extends back to the right.

افوض امري الى الله ان الله بصير بالعباد  
I entrust my affair to God. God is observer of His servants (Qur'ān 40:44)

29 × 26 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 10. Christy collection

A42



Carnelian, pale to bright orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche with background of clusters of dots.

ان الله على كل شيء قدير

For Allāh has power over everything

This phrase occurs in various places in the Qur'ān, for example 2:20.

38 × 23 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 3. Christy collection

A43



Carnelian, orange. Oval, slightly convex top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche, with background of clusters of dots.

يا رحمن كل شيء وراحمه

O Merciful One! Merciful over everything

*Al-rahmān*, one of the Names of God. This phrase may be based on Qur'ān 40: 7: *rabbanā wasi 'ta kul shay' rahmātan wa 'ilman* (Our Lord, You embrace everything in mercy and knowledge), with *yā rahmān* substituted for *rabbanā*. If this is the case then *rahmātan* has been written with an *alif* (from *rāḥama*).

28 × 22 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 37. Christy collection

A44



Carnelian. Oval, flattish top and flat base with high straight sides. Scratched cursive inscription.

الملك لله

Sovereignty belongs to God

Sovereignty (on that day) belongs to God (Qur'ān 22:56)

For the use of this phrase on seals see **Cat. 289–298**.

17 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 43. Christy collection

A45



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) inscription, cross above the *kāf*.

Double lines around the edge of the stone.

توكلت على الله

I put my trust in God (Qur'ān 10:71) and elsewhere in various forms (*Concordance: 851*). For seals with this phrase see **Cat. 250–251**.

18 × 12 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 41. Christy collection

A46



Nephrite, pale grey. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) with background of clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

العزة لله جميعا

All glory belongs to God (Qur'ān 4:139)

For seals inscribed with the same inscription see **Cat. 305–310**.

21 × 13 × 2 mm  
Sloane amulet 11

A47



Chalcedony, oval with slightly concave top and flat base and bevelled sides. Two lines of scratched cursive script with background of crosses, single line around the edge of the stone.

صراط على حق الله or حق لله

Truth according to the path of God

Although this specific phrase is not in the Qur'ān, there are numerous references there to 'the straight path', *al-ṣirāt al-mustaqīm* (Qur'ān 2:142 and elsewhere). An alternative reading is 'the path of 'Alī, the truth belongs to God'

24 × 22 × 3.5 mm  
1943 10–9 10. Godwin-Austen collection



## The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus



Bronze mirror, twelfth–thirteenth century  
(1963 7–18 1) diam. 195 mm

The ‘Seven Sleepers of Ephesus’ of the miraculous story – the seven Christian youths persecuted by the Roman emperor Decius, who fell asleep in a cave and woke up several centuries later – are also objects of reverence in the Islamic tradition and their story is told in the Qur’ān (18:9–25), where they are known as ‘the people of the cave’ (*ahl al-kahf*) (Paret, ‘Aṣḥāb al-Kahf’, EI<sup>2</sup>; Canaan 1937: 89–90; Porter 2007).

The names, which derive from the Greek, are usually written as follows, although there may occur slight variations of spellings: Doqīānūs, Yamliḥā, Makslīmīa or Makshlīmīā, Marnūs, Dabarnūs, Sadnūs or Shādhnūs, Kafsaṭīṭūs or Kafshaṭīṭūs and the dog Qitmīr, who is believed to be one of the few animals to have entered heaven. Their names are inscribed on a variety of types of objects, many of them magical, for example the back of the twelfth- to thirteenth-century bronze mirror above, where they are combined with magical elements such as the ‘seven magical signs’ (see p. 170).

They also frequently appear on amulets, particularly from the late Ottoman period. See also two gold amulets with the names of the Seven Sleepers (Cat. A104–A106). For further examples of amulets inscribed with the names of the Seven Sleepers, see Reinaud (1828, vol. 2: 59, no. 25) and an example in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Canaan 1937: 89–90; Kalus 1981: 35).

A48



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscriptions on both sides with background of stars, sprigs and clusters of dots. All the letter *sīns* of Side B have three dots above them.

Side A

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم فرد حي قيوم حكم  
عدل قدوس

Side B

يملحيا مكشليميا مشليما مرنوش ديرنوش  
شابرنوش كفسططوش قطمير

Side A: *Basmala*. Alone, Living, Everlasting, Judge, Just, Most Holy. Six of the Names of God.

Side B:

(From the top) Iamlīkhā, Makshlīmā, Mashlīmā, Marnūsh, Dabarnūsh, Shābarnūs, Kafsaṭūs, Qitmīr

27 × 22.5 × 4.2 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 9

A49



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription.

يملحيا مكشليميا مرنوش ديرنوش  
شابرنوش كفسططوش قطمير ما شاء الله

(From the top) Iamlīkhā, Makslīmā, Maslīma, Marnūs, Dabarnūs, Sābarnūs, Kafsaṭūs, Qitmīr. As God wills

19 × 12 × 2.5 mm  
1866 12–29 113. Duc de Blacas collection.

*a‘ūdhu bi-jalāl Allāh,*  
(I seek protection in the glory  
of God’ etc.)

The following group of amulets are made of metal or a kind of igneous rock. The inscriptions are in a scratched cursive script sometimes on all sides of the object. On the flat face is generally found the phrase which starts *a‘ūdhu bi-jalāl Allāh* with other phrases included such as the *shahāda*. The epigraphic style varies from a clear cursive script (Cat. A53) to a crude style (Cat. A51). A similar example in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kalus 1981: 89 III.1. 36) has been termed a modern ‘pseudo-talisman’. Although the inscription only becomes legible when set in the context of the more legible examples, it is likely that even crudely written, virtually illegible letters and phrases were believed to be efficacious for the owner of the amulet.

A50



Unalloyed copper. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Three lines of very careless cursive script.

اعوذ بجلال الله  
اعوذ بكلمات الله  
اعوذ برسول الله

1. I believe in the glory of God
2. I believe in the words of God
3. I believe in the Prophet of God

12 × 10 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 46. Christy collection

A51



Fine-grained igneous rock, dark brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. It is engraved on all sides in careless cursive script; the back is inscribed in a different hand.

Narrow sides

اشهد / ان لا اله / الا الله / مخلصا

Flat Side A

اعوذ بجلال الله  
اعوذ بكلمات الله  
اعوذ برسول الله

Flat Side B

امنت بالله و [...] [.....]

Narrow sides: I testify that there is no god but God with sincere devotion

Flat Side A:

1. I seek protection in the glory of God
2. I seek protection in the words of God
3. I seek protection in the Prophet of God

Flat Side B:

I believe in God [.....]

13 × 9 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 45. Christy collection

A52



Goethite, brown. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved on all sides in scratched cursive script, the back in a different hand.

Narrow sides

اشهد / ان لا اله / الا الله / مخلصا

Flat Side A

اعوذ بجلال الله  
اعوذ بكلمات الله  
اعوذ برسول الله

Flat Side B

امنت بالله و رسوله [...] [.....]  
صل الله و سلم (؟)  
رب [ال] عالمين

Narrow sides: I testify that there is no god but God with sincere devotion

Flat side A

1. I seek protection in the glory of God
2. I seek protection in the words of God
3. I seek protection in the Prophet of God

Flat side B:

I believed in God and his Prophet, peace be upon Him, Lord of the worlds

13 × 10 × 3 mm

1878 12–20 44. Christy collection

A53



Haematite. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Carved on all sides with cursive script. The back in a different hand.

Narrow sides

اشهد / ان لا اله / الا الله / مخلصا

Flat Side A

اعوذ بجلال الله  
اعوذ بكلمات الله  
اعوذ برسول الله  
امنت برسول الله  
صل الله و سلم [.....]

Side B

امنت بالله و رسوله  
صل الله و سلم

Narrow sides: I testify that there is no god but God with sincere devotion

Flat side A

1. I seek protection in the glory of God
2. I seek protection in the words of God
3. I seek protection in the Prophet of God

The inscription is very worn on this face.

Flat side B:

I believed in the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and peace be upon him

10 × 7 × 1 mm

1878 12–20 47. Christy collection



A54



Haematite. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Carved on front and back with cursive script, the back in a different hand.

Side A

اعوذ بجلال الله  
اعوذ بكلمات الله  
اعوذ برسول الله

Side B

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله  
علي ولي الله المخلص في امان الله

Side A

1. I seek protection in the glory of God
2. I seek protection in the words of God
3. I seek protection in the Prophet of God

Side B

There is no god but God, Muḥammad is Messenger of God (*shahāda*). 'Alī is the sincere friend of God, in God's protection

10 × 7 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 48. Christy collection

### Supplications to God

In the following group of amulets, the inscriptions consist of invocations and supplications to God, to the Prophet Muḥammad and to the Shī'ī imams. This is sometimes preceded by *yā* (O) *Allāh* for example. A popular invocation is to God as 'Granter of Needs' (*yā qaḍī al-ḥājāt*), often accompanied with the associated phrase 'sufficient in difficulties'. Lane (1981: 558) noted the use of this phrase on amulets in nineteenth-century Egypt. It is also sometimes combined with the invocation to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib: 'Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear', which ends in 'O 'Alī' repeated three times (A85). 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.40/661) was the cousin and

brother-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad, and was married to his daughter Fāṭima. He is both one of the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the first of the Shī'ī imams, and is revered by Sunnīs and Shī'a. The presence of 'Alī's name alone on an amulet does not necessarily imply that this is a Shī'ī object, however (for further information on the Twelve Imams see Cat. 330ff.). The invocation to the Twelve Imams or Fourteen Immaculates (with the addition of the Prophet Muḥammad and Fāṭima) is often in the form of *yā Allāh ṣalli 'alā*, which is here translated as 'O God bless...', with the imams often referred to by their attributes, 'the Chosen Muḥammad', 'the Accepted 'Alī', and so on. The phrase *ṣalli 'alā* has also been translated as 'incline unto', reflecting the Aramaic sense of the root (Hoyland 1997a: 80, n. 15).

A55



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) with clusters of dots in the background. Single line around the edge of the stone.

يا الله المحمود في كل افعاله

O God, praised in all his actions

16 × 10 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 42. Christy collection

A56



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and slightly concave base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of *fī*.

يا الله المحمود في كل افعاله

O God, praised in all his actions

20 × 15 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 39. Christy collection

A57



Carnelian, pale orange with dark orange band. Octagonal, flat with bevelled sides, broken. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche, dots in the background.

يا قاضي الحاجات يا كافي المهمات

O Granter of Needs, sufficient in difficulties

For another example see Cat. A86, where it is combined with the invocation to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

20 × 17 × 2 mm  
1866 12–29 114. Duc de Blacas collection

A58



Nephrite, pale grey-green. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of *qāḍī*. Background of clusters of dots, double lines around the edge of the stone.

يا قاضي الحاجات

O Granter of Needs

20 × 13 × 3 mm  
Sloane amulet 12

A59



Haematite. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of *kāfī*.

يا قاضي الحاجات يا كافي المهمات

O Granter of Needs, sufficient in difficulties

16 × 14 × 3 mm  
OA+ 11454. Sloane amulet 18

### God, the Prophet Muḥammad and his family, and the Twelve Imams

A60



Leaded tin bronze. Oval, flat with bevelled edges. One line of angular script, inscribed in positive. The letters stand out against a hatched ground.

محمد

Muḥammad

Although this object and the next could belong to a person named Muḥammad, it is likely, since they are inscribed in positive, that they are also serving as an invocation to the Prophet.

12 × 10 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 51. Christy collection

A61



Leaded brass. Rectangular, flat with straight sides. The word *Muḥammad* is inscribed in positive and can be read in two directions as in the two examples above.

محمد

Muḥammad

7 × 10 × 2 mm  
OA + 14317

A62



Steel brushed with gold. Square, flat with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription in gold against a hatched ground set in a square frame.

يا الله يا محمد يا علي

O God, O Muḥammad, O 'Alī

13 × 13 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 36. Christy collection

A63



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche, divided by the return of *yā* of *walī*. The inscription starts from the bottom right.

محمد نبي الله علي ولي الله

Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the friend of God

For seals with references to the Prophet and 'Alī see **Cat. 332–334**.

29 × 18 × 1 mm  
1878 12–20 31. Christy collection

A64



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche. The inscription is read from the bottom right.

محمد نبي الله علي ولي الله

Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the friend of God

24 × 18 × 4 mm  
1866 12–29 90. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 148, no. 6)

A65



Bloodstone, dark-green with red flecks. Oval, convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with background of floral scrolls. Double line around the edge of the stone.

محمد نبي الله علي ولي الله

Muḥammad is the Prophet of God, 'Alī is the friend of God

23 × 19 × 3.5 mm  
1853 3–28 3. Auckland collection

A66



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription with clusters of dots in the background. Single line around the edge of the stone.

يا علي ولي الله

O 'Alī friend of God

22 × 15 × 4 mm  
1878 12–20 6. Christy collection

A67



Carnelian, orange. Round with flat top and base and lobed bevelled edges. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) within a cartouche divided by the return of the *yā* of 'Alī.



الله محمد علي فاطمه حسن حسين

Allāh Muḥammad 'Alī Fāṭima Ḥasan Ḥusayn

25 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 34. Christy collection

A68



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat top and base with straight sides. Etched cursive inscription on three lines.

الله محمد حسن حسين علي فاطمه

Allāh Muḥammad Ḥasan Ḥusayn 'Alī Fāṭima

10 × 10 × mm  
1866 12–29 97. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud, 1828, vol. 2: 183, no. 79)

A69



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, with flat top and base with high straight sides. Cursive inscription, double lines around the edge of the stone.

محمد علي فاطمه حسن حسين

Muḥammad 'Alī Fāṭima Ḥasan Ḥusayn

11 × 9 × 4.5 mm  
1866 12–29 96. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 180 no. 78)

### The Fourteen Immaculates

'The Fourteen Immaculates' is the name given to the Twelve Imams with the addition of Muḥammad and Fāṭima (for seals engraved with the names of the Twelve Imams or Fourteen Immaculates, see Cat. 341ff.).

A70



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval, flat top with bevelled sides set in a silver mount. Cursive inscription divided into five sections by the returns of the yā's of the first three 'Alīs and 'alā on the fourth line.

اللهم صل على المصطفى محمد  
والمرتضى علي و البتول فاطمه و  
السبطين الحسن والحسين وصل على  
زين العباد علي و الباقر محمد والصادق  
جعفر و الكاظم موسى و الرضا علي  
و النبي محمد والنقي علي والزكي  
العسكري الحسن وصل على الامام الهمام  
محمد المهدي عليه و عليهم السلام

O God! Bless the Chosen Muḥammad and the Accepted 'Alī / and the Virgin Fāṭima and the two Gentle ones al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and bless the ornament of the servant of God 'Alī / and the Great Muḥammad and the Just Ja'far and the Silent Mūsā and the Pleasing 'Alī / and the Pious Muḥammad and the Pure 'Alī, and the Virtuous the Soldier al-Ḥasan, and bless / the High-minded imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī, on him and on them be peace.

The Fourteen Immaculates and their epithets.

26 × 22 × 7 mm  
1878 12–20 27. Christy collection

A71



Rock crystal. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription divided into sections by the returns of the yā's of the four 'Alīs.

اللهم صل على محمد و علي و فاطمه  
والحسن والحسين و علي و محمد و  
جعفر و موسى و علي و محمد و علي و  
الحسن و محمد

O God! Bless Muḥammad and 'Alī / and Fāṭima and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and 'Alī / and Muḥammad and Ja'far and Mūsā and 'Alī / and Muḥammad and 'Alī and al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad

The Fourteen Immaculates.

34 × 24 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 1 Christy collection

A72



Rock crystal with tourmaline inclusions(?). Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscriptions divided into sections by the returns of the yā's of the four 'Alīs.

اللهم صل على محمد و علي و فاطمه  
والحسن والحسين و علي و محمد و  
جعفر و موسى و علي و محمد و علي  
والحسن و محمد

O God! Bless Muḥammad and 'Alī / and Fāṭima and al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn and 'Alī / and Muḥammad and Ja'far and Mūsā, and 'Alī / and Muḥammad and 'Alī and al-Ḥasan and Muḥammad

38 × 24 × 6 mm  
1880–3655. Masson collection, no. 20

A73



Chalcedony, white and yellow. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (nasta'liq) divided into two sections by the return of the yā' of 'Alī. Background of rosettes and dashes. Single line around the edge of the stone.

علي حسن حسين علي محمد جعفر علي  
موسى محمد علي حسن محمد

'Alī Ḥasan Ḥusayn 'Alī Muḥammad Ja'far  
'Alī / Mūsā Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥasan  
Muḥammad

46 × 23 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 2 Christy collection

## A74



Carnelian, pale orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription (*nasta'liq*) divided into three sections by the returns of the *yā*'s of the two 'Alīs.

علي حسن حسين علي محمد جعفر  
موسى علي محمد علي حسن محمد

'Alī Ḥasan Ḥusayn 'Alī / Muḥammad Ja'far  
Mūsā 'Alī/ Muḥammad 'Alī Ḥasan  
Muḥammad

14 × 9 × 1 mm

1866 12–29 98. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 190, no. 8)

## A75

Serpentine necklace consisting of one large broken amulet in the centre and twelve smaller amulets in different shapes on either side.

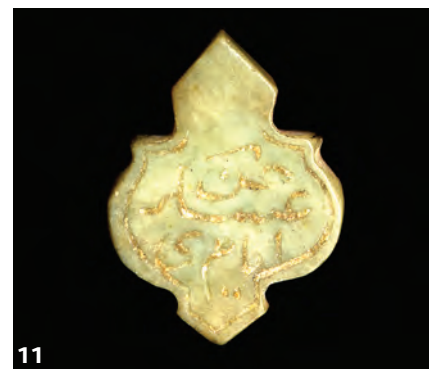
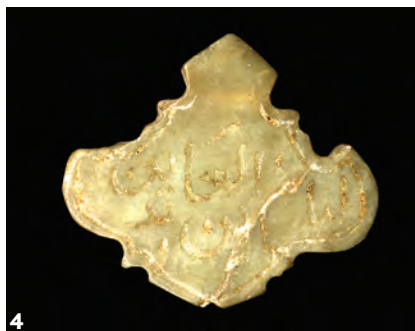
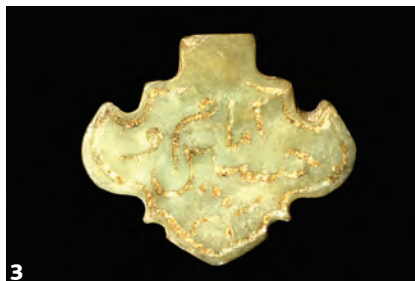


Large amulet

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
ناد عليا مظهر العجا / نب تجده عوننا لك  
/ [في ال]نوائب كل هم وغم /  
[سينجلي] بنبوتك يا محمد بولا / يتك يا  
علي

Large amulet:

Lines 1–6: *Basmala*. Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī







## Smaller amulets

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. امام علي مرتضى      | 1. Imam 'Alī, Chosen                        |
| 2. امام حسن            | 2. Imam Ḥasan                               |
| 3. امام حسين و         | 3. Imam Ḥusayn and                          |
| 4. امام زين العابدين   | 4. Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn                     |
| 5. امام محمد باقر      | (the ornament of the servants of God, 'Alī) |
| 6. امام جعفر صادق      | 5. Imam Muḥammad Bāqir                      |
| 7. امام موسى الكاظم    | 6. Imam Ja'far, Just                        |
| 8. امام رضا موسى [sic] | 7. Imam Mūsā, Silent                        |
| 9. امام علي نقی        | 8. Imam Riḍā, son of Mūsā                   |
| 10. امام محمد تقی      | 9. Imam 'Alī, Pure                          |
| 11. امام حسن عسكري     | 10. Imam Muḥammad, Pious                    |
| 12. امام مهدي          | 11. Imam Ḥasan, Soldier                     |
|                        | 12. Imam Mahdī                              |

Large amulet, 35 × 35 × 3 mm (max.);  
small, average 16 × 20 × 3 mm  
OA+ 1422

A76



Nephrite, pale grey. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides, surface worn. Cursive inscription divided into sections. Single line around the edge of the stone.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بولايته  
يا علي يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

The words are not all written in the normal order: this is to create a better arrangement on the amulet. The phrase *kul ham wa gham* is on line 3 after *sayanjālī* on line 2.

17 × 25 × 2 mm

1878 12–20 7 Christy collection

A77



Chalcedony, yellow. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscription divided into sections by the returns of the *yā's* of *fī* and *sayanjālī*. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً / لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بولايته  
يا علي يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

*laka* is on the second line instead of after 'awnan on the first.

30 × 15 × 4 mm

1878 12–20 4. Christy collection

A78



Dark-orange oval carnelian set within a pale green nephrite frame and inner gold frame. Cursive inscription on four lines.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بنبوتك يا  
محمد بولايته يا علي يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear you will find him a help to you in adversity all care and grief will clear away through your prophethood O Muḥammad through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

41 × 27 × 3 mm

Sloane amulet 1

A79



Serpentine, pale green. Plaque with cursive inscription, divided into three sections. Dense background of dashes.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بنبوتك يا  
محمد بولايته يا علي يا علي يا علي

Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī

52 × 35 × 6 mm

1890 11–10 6

A80



Nephrite, pale green. Plaque with cursive inscription, divided into three sections. Dense background of dashes. On the back is a piece of stamped leather in the shape of the amulet.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بنبوتك يا  
محمد بولايته يا علي

Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī

48 × 35 × 6 mm

1890 11–10 7

A81



Metal plaque, square with protruding rounded sides. Loop at the top for suspension. Cursive inscription. Double lines around the edge.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ناد عليا مظهر  
العجائب تجده عوناً لك في النوائب كل هم  
و غم سينجلي بنبوتك يا محمد بولايته يا  
علي يا علي يا علي



*Basmala*. Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

43 × 26 × 1 mm  
1843 6–9 23

## A82



Silver talisman with hole at the top for suspension. Inscribed with cursive inscriptions on both sides.

Side A

3 projections at the top:

لله محمد علي  
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Central square extending to lower lobe:

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

Left and right lobes:

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده / عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم / و غم سينجلي بنوتك  
يا محمد / بولايتك يا علي يا علي / يا علي  
حسن [sic]

Side B

3 projections at the top

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Top

انا فتحنا لك فتحا مبينا  
قل هو الله احد / الله الصمد / لم يلد ولم يولد  
ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Central square

لا اله الا الله  
محمد رسول الله  
مولانا علي ولي الله

Left lobe

يا الله يا محمد يا علي

Right lobe

يا الله يا محمد يا علي

Lower lobe

فاطمه حسن حسين

Side A

Three projections at the top: God, or For God, Muḥammad, 'Alī

Central square: *Basmala*. God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255).

Left and right lobes: Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care / and grief will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

At the end is probably Ḥasan.

Side B

Three projections at the top: *Basmala*

Top: We have given you a clear victory' (Qur'ān 48:1)

On the four sides of the margin: Say, 'He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him' (Qur'ān 112)

Central square: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is his messenger (*shahāda*), our master is 'Alī the friend of God

Left lobe: O God, O Muḥammad, O 'Alī

Right lobe: O God, O Muḥammad, O 'Alī

Lower lobe: Fāṭima Ḥasan Ḥusayn

70 × 80 × 2 mm (max.)

1920.81; OA+ 7431. Presented by Louis Clarke

## A83



Chalcedony, white and pale brown. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions, large-scale and outlined in the centre against a hatched ground, and smaller-scale around the margin with a background of clusters of dots. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

محمد نبي الله

Margin

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم و غم سينجلي بولايتك  
يا علي يا علي يا علي

Centre: Muḥammad is the Prophet of God

Margin: Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

27 × 20 × 9 mm

1853 3–28 2. Auckland collection

## A84



Chalcedony, white. Rectangular, flat with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions, large-scale in the centre with thick strokes against a hatched ground, and smaller-scale around the margin with a background of clusters of dots.

Centre

الله ولي  
التوفيق

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ناد عليا مظهر  
العجائب تجده عوناً لك في النوائب كل  
هم وغم سينجلي بولايتك يا علي يا علي  
يا علي

Centre (lines 1–2): God is the friend of  
success

Margin: *Basmala*. Call upon 'Alī who  
makes wonders appear, you will find him  
a help to you in adversity, all care and grief  
will clear away through your friendship, O  
'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

26 × 24 × 6 mm  
Sloane amulet 13

A85



Nephrite, pale brown. Rectangular, flat  
with lobed ends and bevelled sides. Cursive  
inscription, which is large-scale in the  
centre and smaller in the compartments  
around the sides.

Centre

يا قاضي الحاجات

Upper margin

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب

Bottom margin

كل هم وغم سينجلي بولايتك يا علي يا  
علي يا علي

Right lobe

توكلت على الله

Left lobe

وفق الى الله

Top right

يا رحمان

Top left

يا ديان

Bottom right

يا حنان

Bottom left

يا منان

Centre: O Granter of Needs

Margin: Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders  
appear, you will find him a help to you in  
adversity, all care and grief will clear away  
through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī,  
O 'Alī

Right lobe: I have placed my trust in God

Left lobe: Harmony belongs to God

Right and left corners:

Top right: O Merciful (*yā raḥmān*); top left:  
O Ever Requiting One (*yā dayyān*); bottom  
right: O Ever Yearning One (*yā ḥannān*);  
bottom left: O Benefactor (*yā mannān*)

42 × 22 × 4 mm  
1893 2–5 108

A86



Chalcedony, yellow. Pear-shaped, flat top  
and base with bevelled sides. Cursive  
inscriptions in the centre and around the  
margin with background of dots. Double  
lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

ما شاء الله  
لا قوة الا بالله  
استغفر  
الله

Margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ناد عليا مظهر  
العجائب تجده عوناً لك في النوائب كل  
هم و غم سينجلي بولايتك يا علي يا علي  
يا علي

Centre: 1–4. As God wills, there is no  
power except through God (Qur'ān 18:39,  
Jones 2007: 275). I ask forgiveness of God

Margin: *Basmala*. Call upon 'Alī who  
makes wonders appear, you will find him  
a help to you in adversity, all care and grief  
will clear away through your friendship,  
O 'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī

22 × 31 × 3 mm  
Sloane amulet 15

A87



Chalcedony, pale brown and white. Oval,  
flat top and base with high straight sides.  
Cursive inscriptions, large-scale in the  
centre, in relief against a hatched ground,  
and smaller-scale in two marginal bands  
around the edge. Single line around the  
edge of the stone.

Centre

يا محمد

Inner margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم قل هو الله احد الله  
الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Outer margin

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم و غم سينجلي بولايتك  
يا علي يا علي يا غفار يا حافظ

Centre: O Muḥammad

Inner margin: *Basmala*. Say, 'He is God,  
One, God, the Eternal, Who has not  
begotten nor has been begotten. There is no  
equal to Him' (Qur'ān 112)

Outer margin: Call upon 'Alī who makes  
wonders appear, you will find him a help  
to you in adversity, all care and grief will  
clear away through your friendship, O  
'Alī, O 'Alī, O 'Alī. O Ever Forgiving One  
(*ghaffār*), O Guardian (*ḥāfiẓ*)

28 × 24 × 7.5 mm  
OA+ 11434



A88



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base and bevelled sides. Cursive inscriptions in the centre and around the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone.

Centre

لا اله الا انت سبحانك اني كنت من الظالمين

Margin

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوناً لك  
في النوائب كل هم وغم سينجلي بولايتك  
يا علي يا علي يا علي

Centre: There is no god but You. Glory be to You. I have been one of the wrong-doers (Qur'an 21:87)

Margin: Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away through your friendship, O 'Alī, O 'Alī O 'Alī

33.5 × 21 × 5 mm  
OA+1364

**A89 (below)**

Rectangular silver votive plaque. The cursive inscription in *naskh* on eleven lines is an invocation to God in the name of Gul (written Kul) Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (line 4), who is also named as Gul Muḥammad b. K-rānū (line 10).



1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
2. يا الله العطوف الرؤف الرحيم يا الله
3. الخافض الحليم يا الله الحي القيوم يا الله
4. القادر على كل نعمتن بما كسبت (؟) يا
5. الله ذو الجلال والاكرام يا مسبب الاسباب
6. يا مفتاح
7. الابواب افتح على صاحب كتابي هذا
8. كل محمد بن عبد العزيز ابواب فضلك و
9. ابواب
10. كرامتك وابواب نعمتك وابواب سعادتك
11. وابواب عطيتك وابواب قناعتك
12. وابواب عنايتك وابواب ذكرك وابواب
13. شكرك وابواب طاعتك وابواب
14. توفيقك وابواب هنانك وابواب شرفك
15. وابواب
16. اللهم انك قد قبلت برزقي ورزق كل
17. دابة انت اخذ بنا صديقا
18. يا خير من اعطى ويا خير من دعي
19. اللهم اني اسالك لصاحب كتابي هذا
20. كل محمد بن كرانو امن فضلك الواسع
21. رزقا واسعا جلالا طيبا مباركا
22. هنيئا مريئا بلا كد ولا منة احد من
23. خلقك فانك قلت و اسئلوا الله من فضله
24. فاني اسالك من فضلك واسالك من
25. عطيتك يا حي يا قيوم يا حنان يا منان يا
26. ذا الجلال والاكرام

1. Basmala
2. O God the Clement, the Most Indulgent, the Merciful, O God the Abaser, Slow to Anger, O God the Living, the Everlasting, O God
3. Capable over all we make strong through that which You have obtained for us (?), O God Possessor of Glory and Generosity, O You who cause events to happen, O You who open
4. the doors, open for the owner of this text Gul Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz the doors of Your grace and the doors of

5. Your generosity and the doors of Your ease and the doors of Your happiness, and the doors of Your gift and the doors of Your contentment
6. and the doors of Your solicitude and the doors of mentioning Your name, and the doors of Your thanks, and the doors of Your compliance, and the doors of
7. Your success, and the doors of Your happiness and the doors of Your obedience and the doors of Your honour and the doors
8. O God You have accepted to feed me and feed every animal (living thing). You have adopted us as a friend
9. O blessed is He who gives and blessing on he who calls. O God I ask You on behalf of the owner of this text
10. Gul Muḥammad bin K-rānū feels safe in Your extensive grace extensive sustenance (which is) glorious, good, blessed
11. happy, wholesome, without difficulty and there is no grace for any of Your creation for You have said and ask God for his grace
12. and I ask You of Your grace and I ask of Your generosity O Living, O Eternal, O Ever Yearning, O Ever bestowing, O Possessor of Glory and Generosity

68 × 49 × 1 mm  
1881 9-9 11

**A90**

Iron. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on seven lines.

1. اعددت لكل هول لا اله الا الله
2. ولكل كرب لا حول ولا قوة الا بالله
3. ولكل مصيبة نازلة حسبي الله
4. ولكل ذنب وكبيرة استغفر الله
5. ولكل هم وغم ما شاء الله
6. ولكل نعمة متجددة الحمد لله
7. يا محمد رضى بن محمد نصر من نعم
8. فمن الله

1. I have prepared myself for every shock, There is no god but God
2. and for every distress, there is no power or might except in God

3. and for every forthcoming calamity, my trust is in God  
 4. and for every sin and grave offence, I ask forgiveness of God  
 5. and for all care and grief, as God wills  
 6. and for every new pleasure, thanks be to God  
 7. What of God's bounties come to Muḥammad Riḍā son of Muḥammad Nasir come from God

For another example of this text see Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 288 on an amulet in the collection of M. Jaubert. The inscription differs principally in the first few words of the last line, which starts *wa mā bi 'Abd Allāh* and goes on *min ni 'mat fa min Allāh*. (The phrase is based on the Qur'ānic verse 'whatever blessings you have are from God' Qur'ān 16:53)

30 × 25 × 5 mm  
 OA+ 7452

## A91



Nephrite jade. Engraved both sides. Round, flat top and base with angled bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides in two styles of cursive script. Side A is c. fifteenth-century in style and relates to seals Cat. 376f. It is divided into two sections by the return of the *yā* of *nabī* and with two knot motifs, the upper with three compartments, the lower with four. The inscription on side B is more sketchily written, tending towards *nasta'liq* and clearly written later.

الوائق بالنبى والصحف  
 العبد علي ابن يوسف

Side A. The one who trusts in the Prophet and the pages (i.e. of the Qur'ān, known as *mushaf*). The servant 'Alī b. Yūsuf

و يسبح الرعد بحمده و الملائكة من  
 خيفته ويرسل الصواعق فيصيب بها  
 من يشاء وهم يجادلون في الله وهو شديد  
 المحال

Side B. The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him. He sends forth the thunderbolts and smites with them those whom He wishes. Yet they dispute concerning God. He is mighty in wrath (Qur'ān 13:13)

20 × 20 × 4 mm  
 OA+ 7435

## A group of gold amulets

Although the types of inscriptions in this group of amulets can be largely found on amulets elsewhere in the catalogue, these amulets have been placed here as a single group because of the characteristics they share. All are made of gold and many give the appearance of coins, particularly eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Ottoman coins. In some cases the same inscription is stamped on both sides, and several have suspension loops or have been pierced, presumably so that they can be sewn onto clothing.

## A92



Gold. Round, set in a gold frame. Inscribed on both sides with three lines of crudely written cursive *nasta'liq* script with

clusters of leaves around the inscription. The numeral '2' is after *illā* on the first line of Side A.

Side A

لا اله الا ٢  
 الله محمد رسول الله

Side B

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

Side A: lines 1–3: There is no god but (2) God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God

Side B: lines 1–3: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God

40 × 1 mm  
 C&M 1869 8–3 1

## A93



Gold, round. Inscribed on both sides in cursive script (*thuluth*) with background of floral sprigs. Pierced twice.

Side A

لا اله الا الله

Side B

محمد رسول الله

Side A: There is no god but God

Side B: Muḥammad is the messenger of God

12 × 1 mm  
 C&M 1875 6–6 28



A94



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides in cursive script. On Side B the inscription is within and around a six-pointed star. Pierced.

Side A

لا اله الا الله  
محمد رسول الله

Side B  
Centre

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
(twice)

Side A: lines 1–2. There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God

Side B: centre of star: God

Between the star and the outer circle repeated twice: In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate

29 × 1 mm  
C&M OR 0230

A95



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides in cursive script (*thuluth*) against a background of floral sprigs and a chevron border around the edge. Damaged in the centre.

Side A

لا  
اله الا الله  
الملك الحق  
المبين

Side B

محمد  
رسول الله  
صادق الوعد  
الامين

Side A. There is no god but God, the King, the Revealed Truth

Side B Muḥammad is the messenger of God, faithful in (keeping) his promise, the Safe

35 × 1 mm  
C&M OR 0229

A96



Gold. Pear-shaped, inscribed on both sides with a cursive inscription in *thuluth* with floral sprig background and chevron border. Broken at the top.

Side A

ما شاء الله

Side B

يا حافظ

Side A: As God wills

Side B: O Guardian (*ḥāfīz*) (one of the Names of God)

21 × 23 mm  
C&M 1877 7–6 134. Collection H.H. Gibb

A97



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides with the same cursive inscription struck from the same die, in *thuluth* with floral sprig background and chevron border. Pierced twice at the top.

Side A and B

ما شاء الله

Side A and B: As God wills

20 × 1 mm

C&amp;M 1921 10–14 52

A98



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides with the same inscription in cursive script (*thuluth*) struck from the same die. Interlocking split leaf border.

Side A and B

يا مفتاح الابواب افتح لنا خير الناس

O You who open gates, open (the gates) for us the best of people

God as the 'opener of gates' (that is, of mercy, etc.) is found several times in the Qur'ān (6:44; 7:40). The phrase appears in different contexts; for example, in tilework in the sabīl of 'Abd al-Rahmān Katkhudā (1744) in Cairo (Raymond 2000: fig. 369).

35 × 1 mm

C&amp;M 1921 10–14 55

A99



Gold. Round, inscribed on one side with cursive inscriptions in *nasta'liq* in a central roundel and in a band around the edge. Loop for suspension at the top.

Centre (divided into three sections)

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب / تجده عوننا لك  
في النوائب كل هم و غم / سينجلي بنبوتك  
يا محمد بولايتك يا علي

Margin

و ان يكاد الذين كفروا ليزلقونك بابصارهم  
لما سمعوا الذكر و يقولون انه لمجنون و  
ما هو الاذکر للعالمين

Centre (divided into three sections): Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear / you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care / will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī

Margin:

Those who are ungrateful almost disconcert you with their glances when they have heard the reminder. They say 'He is possessed'. It is nothing but a reminder for all beings (Qur'ān 68:51–2)

40 × 1 mm

C&amp;M OR 0231



## A100



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides with the same inscription in cursive script (*naskh*). It is pierced around the edge in several places.

Side A and B

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
2. وما ارسلناك الا رحمة للعالمين
3. املح اسمر اللون ببياض ارج ابلج
4. اكهل اشهل رجب الجبهة صغير
5. الاذنين اقنى الانف افلج مدور الوجه
6. واللحية طويل اليدين رقيق الانامل
7. تاقتن القد ليس في بدنه شعر الا الخط
8. من صدر الى السرة وبين كتفيه
9. خاتم النبوة مكتوب فيها
10. توجه حيث شئت [sic]
11. فانك منصور

*Basmala.* We have sent you only as a mercy to all created beings (Qur'an 21:107). Handsome, dark in colour, radiant, in the whiteness of the tone of his skin, fragrant, fair of mature age with bluish-black eyes, a large forehead, small ears, curved nose cleft, round of face and beard, long hands and soft fingertips, of perfect stature, without hair on his body except for the line from the chest to the navel and between his shoulders is the seal of the prophets on which is written 'Go where you will and you will be victorious'.

This is the description of the Prophet Muḥammad known as 'the *ḥilya*' (ornament). The *ḥilya* consisted of statements about the Prophet's physical appearance or his moral qualities. In the Ottoman period it was widely popular and was frequently represented by calligraphers (Schimmel 1985: 36–9; Safwat 1996: 46–50; Derman 1998: 156). Talismanic charts with this description in numerical form were also produced as objects of protection (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 106).

In the *ḥilya*, there are allusions to stories told about the Prophet, such as that a wonderful odour exuded from him. The 'line of hair' refers to a story mentioned in the Qur'an (94:1–3). When at the age of three Muḥammad was operated on by two angels, they removed a black mark on his chest which resulted in a long scar on which a line of hair grew. The seal of prophethood is what may have been a large mole, which all the Prophets had and which disappeared for ever with the death of Muḥammad.

Muḥammad is referred to as 'the seal of the Prophets'. (See Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 76–7, no. 31, for a seal with this inscription and further discussion of the text.)

30 × 1 mm  
C&M 1849 11–21 359. Collection of C.A. Murray

## A101



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides in cursive script (*naskh*) with the same inscription. Clusters of leaves in the margin.

Side A and B

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
قل اعوذ برب الناس ملك الناس  
اله الناس من شر الوسواس الخناس  
الذي يوسوس في صدور الناس  
من الجنة والناس

*Basmala.* Say 'I seek refuge with the Lord of men. The King of men, the God of men, from the evil of a slinking whisperer, who whispers into the bosoms of men – of *jinn* and men' (Qur'an 114)

29 × 1 mm  
C&M OR 0232

## A102



Gold. Round, inscribed with the same inscription in cursive script (*naskh*) on both sides. Broken on one side, pierced for suspension at the top.

1. هو الله الذي لا اله الا هو الرحمن الرحيم
2. الملك القدوس السلام المؤمن المهيمن العزيز
3. المتكبر الخالق البارئ المصور
4. الغفار القهار الوهاب الرزاق الجبار
5. الفتاح العليم القابض الباسط الخافض
6. الرافع المعز المذل السميع
7. البصير الحكم العدل اللطيف الخبير
8. الحليم العظيم الغفور الشكور العلي
9. الكبير الحفيظ المقيت الحسيب الجليل
10. الكريم الرقيب المجيب الواسع الحكيم



7. الودود المجيد الباعث الشهيد الحق  
الوكيل القوي المتين الولي الحميد  
8. المحصى المبدئ المعيد المحي  
المميت الحي القيوم الواجد الماجد الواحد  
الصمد  
9. القادر المقدر المقدم المؤخر الاول  
الآخر الظاهر الباطن الوالي المتعالي  
10. البر التواب المنتقم العفو الرؤف  
مالك الملك ذو الجلال و الاكرام المقسط  
11. الجامع الغني المغني المانع الضار  
النافع الهادي  
12. البديع الباقي الوارث الرشيد الصبور

1. He is God of whom there is no god but He, the Compassionate (*rahmān*), the Merciful (*rahīm*),  
2. the King (*malik*), the Most Holy (*quddūs*), the Peace (*salām*), the Believer (*mu'min*), the Vigilant One (*muhaymin*), the Most Mighty ('*azīz*),  
3. the Haughty (*mutakabbir*), the Creator (*khāliq*), the Producer (*bāri'*), the Organiser (*muṣawwir*), the Pardoner (*ghaffār*), the Dominator (*qahhār*), the Constant Giver (*wahhāb*), the Dispenser of All Good (*razzāq*), the Very Strong (*jabbār*),  
4. the Victorious (*fattāḥ*), the Omniscient ('*alīm*), the Restrainer (*qābiḍ*), the Outstretcher (*bāsīt*), the Abaser (*khāfiḍ*), the Uplifter (*rāfi'*), the Raiser to honour (*mu'izz*), the Degradar (*mudhill*), the Hearer (*samī'*),  
5. The All-Seeing (*baṣīr*), the Judge (*ḥakam*), the Just ('*adl*), the Benevolent (*latīf*), the All-Knowing (*khabīr*), the Slow to Anger (*ḥalīm*), the Supreme ('*azīm*), the Forgiver (*ghafūr*), the Grateful (*shakūr*), the Most High ('*ālī*),  
6. the Great (*kabīr*), the Preserver (*ḥafīẓ*), the Nourisher (*muqīt*), the Reckoner (*ḥasīb*), the Sublime (*jalīl*), the Generous (*karīm*), the Watchful (*raqīb*), the Assenter (*mujiḥ*), the Far-Reaching (*wāsi'*), the Wise (*ḥakīm*),  
7. the Affectionate (*wadūd*), the Most Glorious (*majīd*), the Revivifier (*bā'ith*), the Witness (*shahīd*), the Truth (*ḥaqq*), the Trustee (*wakīl*), the Strong (*qawī*), the Firm (*matīn*), the Protector (*walī*), the Praiseworthy (*ḥamīd*),  
8. the Numberer (*muḥṣī*), the Originator (*mubdī'*), the Revealer (*mu'īd*), the Creator of Life (*muḥyī*), the Causer of Death (*mumīt*), the Living (*ḥayy*), the Everlasting (*qayyūm*), the Perceiver (*wājid*), the Glorious (*mājid*), the Only One (*wāḥid*), the Eternal (*ṣamad*),  
9. the Able (*qādir*), the Powerful (*muqtadir*), the Advancer (*muqaddim*), the Postponer (*mu'akkhīr*), the First (*awwal*), the Last (*ākhir*), the Visible (*zāhir*), the Latent (*bāṭin*), the Helper (*wālī*), the Exalted (*muta'ālī*),  
10. the Righteous (*barr*), the Forgiving (*tawwāb*), the Avenger (*muntaqim*), the

Pardoner ('*afū*), the Most Indulgent (*ra'ūf*) [*sic*], the Master of the Kingdom (*mālik al-mulk*), Possessor of Glory (*dhū al-jalāl*) and Generosity (*wa'l ikrām*), the Just Distributor (*muqṣit*),  
11. the Uniter (*jāmi'*), the Independent (*ghanī*), the Enricher (*mughnī*), the Preventer (*māni'*), the Harmer (*dārr*), the Beneficial One (*nāfi'*), the Light (*nūr*), the Guide (*hādī*),  
12. the Incomparable (*badī'*) the Enduring One (*bāqī*), the Inheritor (*wārith*), the Leader (*rashīd*), the Patient (*ṣabūr*).

The Names of God. For other amulets with the Names of God, see Cat. A1, A2 and Table 5.

42 × 1 mm  
C&M 1921 10–14 56.

## A103



Gold. Round, inscribed on both sides in cursive script, the extensions of the letters forming a geometric design. A wide band with a scroll pattern around the edge. Pierced twice.

Side A: centre

Circular inscription  
(Inner)

(Outer)

يمليحا مكسلمينا مسلنا سابرنوس  
كفسططوس قطمير

Side B: centre

محمد

Circular inscription: same as Side A

Side A centre: God

Circular inscription (inner): Dabarnūs, Marnūs

Circular inscription (outer): Iamlīḥā, Makslamīnā, Maslinā, Sābarnūs, Kafastatanūs, Qitmīr

Side B centre: Muḥammad

Circular inscription: same as side A

The Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and their dog. See p. 151 and Cat. A49 and A50 for the story and two other amulets inscribed with the names of the Sleepers.

32 × 1 mm  
C&M 1849 11–21 358. Collection of C.A. Murray

## A104



Gold, pear shaped. Inscribed on both sides with the same inscription in cursive script. The words are in cartouches with floral sprigs on either side.

Side A and B

اصحاب الكهف  
مكسلمينا يملحيا مشلييا  
دبرنوش مرنوش شابرنوش  
كفسططوس  
قطمير



At the top: 'the friends of the cave'  
Doqiānūs, Yamliḥā, Makshlīmīā, Marnūs,  
Dabarnūs, Shādhnūs, Kafshaṭīṭūs, Qiṭmīr

A very similar example is published by  
Canaan (1938: 89 fig. 6).

32 × 40 × 1 mm  
C&M 1875 5–2 155

#### A105



Gold, round with projection for suspension  
with a hole in the centre. The same design  
and inscriptions are on both sides.

#### Outer Circle

امن لطف لمن نزل / الطف بنا فيما نزل  
انت القوي نجنا من قهر يوم الحلك

#### Centre

يمليحا مكسلينيا مسلنيا  
ديرنوش مرنوش شابرنوش  
كفسططوس قطمير

Centre: As God wills

Around the circle are the names of the  
Seven Sleepers of Ephesus and their dog,  
the extensions of the letters *kāf*, *lām*, etc.,  
forming a star pattern: Yamliḥā, Makshlīmīā,  
Marnūs, Dabarnūs, Maslīniyā, Shādhnus,  
Kafshaṭīṭūs, Qiṭmīr

In this example Doqiānūs has been left out.

Outer circle: He has provided safety and  
been kind to the one who came (i.e. the  
Prophet), He has been kind in what He sent  
down (the Qur'ān), you are the strong one,

deliver us from grief on the day of darkness  
(i.e. of judgement).

64 × 71 × 1 mm  
1994 9–15 888. Gilbertson Bequest

### Three cameo glass amulets

Three virtually identical objects inscribed  
in positive in cameo glass, purple and  
white. Oval, flat with straight sides. Two  
lines of angular script with wedge-shaped  
terminals.

ليس ينجي من القدر  
حزم راي و لا حذر

Neither a firm decision nor caution can save  
one from fate

A107 was in the collection of the Duc de  
Blacas and published by Reinaud (1828,  
vol. 2: 28–33, no. 8) before it was acquired  
by the British Museum. Reinaud relates the  
story that a seal of this kind had belonged  
to the King of Naples and was discovered  
in Calabria. When the stone was found, a  
certain Abbé Vella claimed to see the word  
'Roger', referring to Roger II, Norman king  
of Sicily. He proclaimed that the stone was  
used by him as a wedding ring. This gave  
the stone great celebrity and copies of it  
subsequently appeared all over Europe.

This would explain the existence of  
these three virtually identical examples,  
which came to the British Museum in the  
latter part of the nineteenth century from  
three different sources. It is only with the  
Masson seal (A109) that we can offer a  
possible provenance, as Masson acquired  
the majority of his seals in Afghanistan.  
There seems little likelihood that this  
is a medieval stone; it appears to be a  
nineteenth-century forgery, the banded  
glass intended to imitate onyx.

#### A106



28 × 19 × 4.5 mm  
1866 12–29 85. Duc de Blacas collection  
(Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 28–33, no. 8, where  
further bibliographic references are also to be  
found.)

#### A107



26 × 19 × 4 mm  
1872 5–24 16

#### A108



27 × 20 × 4 mm  
1880–3637. Masson collection no. 3

### Dated amulets

Dates start to appear on amulets only in the  
seventeenth century, about the time they  
also start to appear regularly on seals. The  
following are the dated amulets known to  
the author; a number of these are discussed  
in Blair 2001: 97. As with the dated seals,  
the amulets with only three numbers are  
placed at the end. It is likely that at least  
the amulets with Shi'a texts and maybe the  
others were produced in Iran or possibly in  
a Shi'a context in India. The use of *nasta'liq*  
script lends weight to this.

1029/1619: Chester Beatty Library  
(Is As 31)

1059/1649–50: British Museum  
(1994 8–5 12, Cat. A110)

1077/1666–7: British Museum  
(Sloane amulet 4, Cat. A111)

1078/1667: Ashmolean Museum  
(Kalus 1986: 98, no. II.2.3)

1086/1675–1676: British Museum  
(1878 12–20 9, Cat. A112)

1121/1709–10: Ashmolean Museum  
(Kalus 1986: 60, no. II.1.26)

1161/1748: Walters Art Gallery (Blair  
2001)

1301/1883–4: Zucker collection  
(ed. Content 1987: 328, no. 96)

1166/1752–3: British Museum  
(1903 11–16 10, Cat. A113)

[1]161/1748: British Museum  
(1866 12–29 101, Cat. A114)

[1]170/1756–7: British Museum  
(Sloane amulet 5, Cat. A115)

[1]171/1757–8: Bibliothèque Nationale  
(Kalus 1981: III.1.16)

[1]173/1759–80: Bibliothèque Nationale  
(Kalus 1981: 78, no. 1.11)

## A109



Chalcedony. Oval, flat, set into a silver mount brooch. Inscribed with four lines of cursive script separated by the return of the three *yā*'s of *fi*, *sayanjali*, and *'Alī*. Double line around the edge of the stone. It is dated 1059/1649–50.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عوننا لك  
في النوائب كل هم و غم سينجلي بولايتك  
يا علي يا علي يا علي سنة ١٠٥٩

Lines 1–4. Call upon *'Alī* who makes wonders appear, / you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care and grief will clear away / through your friendship, O *'Alī*, / O *'Alī*, O *'Alī*. Year 1059

The 0 is here written as a large circle, while the 5 is in the form of an upside down heart. (See Blair 1998: 222 and Irani 1955–6: 4 for examples of both these forms in manuscripts in the late sixteenth century.) The words are not all written in the normal order. This is to create a better arrangement on the amulet. Thus the phrase *kul ham wa gham* is on line 3 after *sayanjali* on line 2.

Dimensions excluding the mount: 29 × 23 mm  
1994 8–5 12. Donated by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

## A110



Chalcedony, white. Oval, flat top and base with straight sides. Inscribed with cursive inscriptions in the centre against a hatched ground and in the margin. Double lines around the edge of the stone. It is dated 1077/1666–7.

Centre

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم نصر من الله و  
فتح قريب

Margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة  
ولا نوم له ما في السموات وما في الارض  
من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم  
ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون  
بشيء من علمه الا بما شاء وسع كرسيه  
السموات والارض ولا يؤده حفظهما وهو  
العلي العظيم ١٠٧٧

Centre: *Basmala*. Help from God and a victory near (Qur'ān 61:13)

Margin in two rows: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Most High and the Supreme (Qur'ān 2:255)

*Al-'alī* is omitted and the date 1077 is below *al-'azīm*.

45 × 36 × 5 mm  
Sloane amulet 4

## A111



Carnelian, pinkish-orange. Edges partially whitened, probably during burial. Oval, slightly convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Cursive inscription on four lines, with a background of dots and stars. Double lines around the edge of the stone. It is dated 1086/1675–1676.

ما شاء الله لا قوة الا بالله استغفر الله ١٠٨٦

1–3: As God wills, there is no power except through God. (Qur'ān 18:39) I ask forgiveness of God

4. 1086

19 × 16 × 2 mm  
1878 12–20 9. Christy collection

## A112



Octagonal metal plaque engraved with six lines of cursive *nasta'liq* script within an ornamental border. It is dated 1166/1752–3.

1. الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم  
2. لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما في السموات  
وما  
3. في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع عنده الا  
بإذنه يعلم  
4. ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون  
بشيء من علمه الا  
5. بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض  
ولا يؤده  
6. حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم ١١٦٦

Lines 1–6. God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they



encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty' (Qur'ān 2:255) 1166

350 × 290 × 10 mm  
1903 11–16 10

## A113



Chalcedony, white. Heart-shaped, flat top and base with straight sides. Cursive inscriptions in concentric bands following the outline of the stone. It is dated [1]161/1748.

## Centre

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم و ان يكاد الذين  
كفروا  
ليزلقونك بابصارهم لما سمعوا الذكر  
ويقولون  
انه المجنون وما هو الا ذكر للعالمين

## Inner margin

الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة  
ولا نوم له ما في  
السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي يشفع  
عنده الا باذنه يعلم  
ما بين ايديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون  
بشيء من علمه الا بما شاء  
وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا يؤده  
حفظهما وهو العالي العظيم [1]١٦١

## Outer margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم اللهم صل على  
المصطفى محمد و المرتضى علي و  
البتول  
فاطمة والسبطين الحسن و الحسين و  
صل على زين العباد علي و الباقر محمد  
و  
الصادق جعفر و الكاظم موسى و الرضا  
علي و النبي محمد و النبي علي و الزكي  
العسكري الحسن و صل على الامام  
الهمام محمد المهدي عليه و عليهم  
السلام

Centre: *Basmala*. Those who are ungrateful almost disconcert you with their glances

when they have heard the reminder. They say 'He is possessed'. It is nothing but a reminder for all beings (Qur'ān 68:51–2)

Inner margin: God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty' (Qur'ān 2:255). Above *al-ʿaẓīm*, letter *hā'* (*Hijra*) 161

Outer margin: *Basmala*. O God! Bless the Chosen Muḥammad and the Accepted 'Alī and the Virgin Fāṭima, and the two Gentle ones al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and bless the ornament of the servants of God 'Alī and the Great Muḥammad, and the Just Ja'far, and the Silent Mūsā, and the Pleasing 'Alī and the Pious Muḥammad, and the Pure 'Alī, and the Virtuous the Soldier al-Ḥasan and bless the High-minded Imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī, on him and on them be peace

The Prophet Muḥammad and his daughter Fāṭima and the twelve Shī'a imams and their attributes. The *alif* of al-Zakī doubles up as the *lam* of 'Alī.

(For an amulet in the Walter's Art Gallery in Baltimore which bears the same date, see Blair 2002, where the inscriptions, which include verses from the Qur'ān and the names of the Fourteen Immaculates, are discussed, as well as the political context of the Afsharid period in Iran, during which the amulet was made.)

58 × 42 × 6 mm  
1866 12–29 101 (Reinaud 1828, vol. 2: 101, no. 87; Blair 2001: 90)

## A114



Chalcedony, white. Oval, projecting out at the top. Flat on both sides. The inscription in cursive script has been etched white. Dated [1]170/1756–7

## Centre

و يسبح الرعد بحمده و الملائكة من  
خيفته

## Outer margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم اللهم صل على  
المصطفى محمد و المرتضى علي  
و البتول فاطمة والسبطين الحسن و  
الحسين و صل على زين العباد علي و  
الباقر محمد والصادق جعفر و الكاظم  
موسى و الرضا علي و النبي محمد و  
النبي علي و الزكي العسكري الحسن و  
صل على الامام الهمام محمد المهدي  
عليه و عليهم السلام

## Inner margin

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العالي العظيم [1]١٧٠

Centre: The thunder sounds loudly in praise of Him and so do angels through fear of Him (Qur'ān 13:13)

Outer margin: *Basmala*. Bless the Chosen Muhammad and the Accepted 'Alī and the Virgin Fāṭima, and the two Gentle ones al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, and the ornament of the servants of God 'Alī and the Great Muḥammad, and the Just Ja'far, and the Silent Mūsā, and the Pleasing 'Alī and the Pious Muḥammad, and the Pure 'Alī, and the Virtuous the Soldier al-Ḥasan and bless the High-minded Imam Muḥammad al-Mahdī, on him and on them be peace

Inner margin: *Basmala*. God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255) 170

3 × 52 × 60 mm  
Sloane amulet 5

## Letters, symbols, numbers, strange words, magic squares and the *abjad* system

The amulets in this category are predominantly inscribed with symbols, numbers, individual letters, strange words and magical squares. They may be inscribed in positive or negative and on a range of materials: hardstones or metal. These amulets are related to a larger group of objects which include magical bowls, talismanic charts and shirts, and mirrors, on which some of these elements often appear combined with recognisable Qur'ānic or benedictory inscriptions.

Numbers form an important element of the amulets and are found in magic squares and elsewhere, and these generally represent letters in the order of the ancient form of the Semitic alphabet known as *abjad*, so-called after the first five letters (see **Table 4**) (Weil, 'Abdjad', EI<sup>2</sup>). For example, Allāh = 66, Muḥammad = 92 (where the second *mīm* is not counted twice) and so on. For the numerical value of all the Names of God, see **Table 5**. For the use of *abjad* on astrolabes see Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 168ff.

Symbols in 'lunette script', strings of letters in 'linear Kufic', numbers and letters appear in various forms in the *Shams al-Ma'ārif* of al-Būnī and are used for charms to affect particular situations. For example: 'if you have an enemy or an evil neighbour and you wish to be rid of him, write this talisman (*al-ṭilsam*) on the roof of his house or on a piece of lead or wood and bury it under whatever door you choose and he (the neighbour) will depart from this place' (see al-Būnī n.d.: 243–9 for a variety of different configurations).

### Magical squares

The presence of magic squares, each cell filled with a number or a letter, is a constant feature of amulets and related magical objects. The definition of a magic square is that the sum of each horizontal, vertical and diagonal line must be the same. The earliest recording of a magic square in its simplest form is  $3 \times 3$ . It is thought to have a Chinese origin and is referred to as a way of easing the pains of childbirth in writings attributed to the eighth-century alchemist Jābir ibn Ḥayyān, known in Europe as Geber (Kraus 1942, vol. 2: 73; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 106). In the centre of the  $3 \times 3$  square is always the number 5, and the corner cells contain even numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8. The remaining cells are filled with the odd numbers 1, 3, 7 and 9. The lines all make up the number 15. This square is also known as *budūh*, which is made of the letters that appear when the numbers are

turned into letters using the *abjad* system. The word *budūh* itself was even assigned magical properties. Larger magic squares are often built on the *budūh* letters, such as **Cat. A120**.

#### The *budūh* square

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

<i>dāl</i>	<i>ṭā'</i>	<i>bā'</i>
<i>jīm</i>	<i>hā'</i>	<i>zay</i>
<i>ḥā'</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>wāw</i>

Magic squares on amulets, talismanic shirts and charts and elsewhere, of larger size, were created:  $4 \times 4$ ,  $6 \times 6$  and so on – al-Būnī's squares go up to  $10 \times 10$  and in later years they increased even further. They do not consist of numbers only, but sometimes letters or even complete words, often representing the Names of God (see **Table 5**). Latin squares, known in Arabic as *waḥq majāzī*, are distinguished from the standard magic squares in that each row or column has the same set of numbers or letters but each in a different order to avoid repetition. An example of this is **Cat. A122** (Canaan 1937: 91ff.; Schuster 1972; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 106–7; Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1962, vol. 2: 83ff.; Porter 1998: 143ff.).

### The 'mysterious' letters of the Qur'ān

These letters appear singly or in groups at the beginning of 29 *sūras* of the Qur'ān and are widely used on amulets. The most frequent are the *kāf*, *hā'*, *yā'*, 'ayn, *ṣād* from the beginning of *Sūrat Maryam*. According to Canaan (1937: 94), the prevalent use of the 'mysterious letters' on amulets results from the belief 'that they represent the heavenly language used by the Almighty from whom they derive their natural power ... or that they are the names of the Almighty himself'. (For the most succinct account and discussion, see Pearson, 'al-Ḳur'ān', EI<sup>2</sup>.)

### The seven magical signs

The group of symbols known as 'the seven magical signs' (*sab'a khawātim*) have strong Qur'ānic associations and start to appear in texts and on objects from about the twelfth century onwards. They include the five- or six-pointed star, both of which are known as 'Solomon's seal', the sign by which Solomon maintained his power over the *jinn*. Sometimes the whole group of symbols are described as 'Solomon's seal'

(Dawkins 1944: 146; Doutré 1909: 156–7; Forrest 2001). Al-Būnī believed that the signs stood for seven letters (*fā'*, *jīm*, *shīn*, *thā'*, *zā'*, *khā'*, *zayn*) omitted from the *fātiḥa* (*sawāqit al-fātiḥa*) and that 'every letter contains one of the names of God' (al-Būnī n.d.: 93). The combination of signs also stood for the greatest name of all, which al-Būnī says were also engraved on the heart of Adam (Doutré 1909: 157; Anawati 1967: 26–7; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 60). The signs were described as follows by al-Būnī: '

three sticks are lined up after a seal, at their head is like a bent head of a lance, a *mīm* squashed and amputated, then a ladder which leads to every hoped-for object but which is nonetheless not a ladder; four objects resembling fingers have been lined up, they point towards good things but (they are) without a fist, a *ha'* in half then a *wāw* bent over like a tube (*anbūb*) of a cupper (*hijām*) but which is not a cupping glass. (al-Būnī n.d.; Anawati 1966: 24–7)

### The angels

The names of angels often appear on amulets, frequently inscribed around the sides of the magic squares. Derived from Hebrew angelology, the four archangels known as 'the sultans of angels' (*salaṭīn al-malā'ika*) are each believed to be endowed with special gifts and functions:

Jibrā'īl (Gabriel), the messenger to the Prophets through whom the Qur'ān was transmitted; Mikā'īl, who presides over rain and plants; Isrā'īl, who stands beside the throne guarding the heavenly trumpet; and Azrā'īl, the angel of death. Names of other angels who play different roles, such as guarding particular days of the week, also appear on amulets, as do strange words with the 'angelic' ending *-īl* (Canaan 1937: 81–3).

### Amulets with engraving errors: authentic or not?

Prior to about 1950, Islamic metal amulets with engraved texts, letters, numbers and magic patterns were produced almost exclusively manually, and all were intended to be worn as amulets. We may thus assume that all of these older pieces are indeed authentic products of their time, regardless of their metal, style and quality of engravings, which may differ in various regions and periods of origin and due to sectarian preferences.

Only during the past 60 years has an unprecedented increase in the number of tourists and pilgrims created a large demand for appealing souvenirs including



amulets. Most of these are machine-made, usually from brass or thin machine-cut slices of carnelian, and bear acid etchings rather than engravings. Some of these imitate earlier designs but usually show inferior craftsmanship.

A study involving a large number of authentic-looking metal amulets found many of them to be engraved with texts that differed from the usual inscriptions on such objects; in particular, they included faulty magic squares. The question arose as to whether such amulets were indeed genuine. One explanation could be that an engraver deviated from a traditional pattern at the special request of a client. Squares with inexplicably wrong numbers are rare. Such bogus numbers may indicate that an engraver lacked understanding of magic squares or had no model to copy.

Most wrong numbers in magic squares may have been engraved by mistake. (Canaan 1937: 104; Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1962, vol. 2: 83ff.).

## A115



Octagonal silver plaque with loops on either side for suspension. Cursive inscriptions on both sides.

Side A  
Centre:

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

Margin:

نصر من الله وفتح قريب  
فالله خير حافظا و هو ارحم الراحمين

Side B

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

2. الم الم الله المص

3. الر المر كهيعص

4. طه طس طسم يس ص

5. حم حمعسق ق ق

Side A

Centre: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God (*shahāda*)

Margin: 'Help from God and a victory near' (Qur'ān 61:13)

God is better as a guardian – He is the most merciful of the merciful' (Qur'ān 12:64)

Side B

1. *Basmala*

2. *alif lām mīm, alif lām mīm* (Qur'ān 2, 3, 29, 30, 31, 32), *Allāh, alif lām mīm šād* (Qur'ān 7)

3. *alif lām rā'*, (Qur'ān 10, 11, 14, 15), *alif lām mīm rā'* (Qur'ān 13), *kāf hā' yā' 'ayn šād* (Qur'ān 19)

4. *ṭā' hā'* (Qur'ān 20), *ṭā' sīn* (Qur'ān 27), *ṭā' sīn mīm* (Qur'ān 26, 28), *yā' sīn* (Qur'ān 36), *šād* (Qur'ān 38)

5. *hā' mīm* (Qur'ān 40), *hā' mīm 'ayn sīn qāf* (Qur'ān 42), *qāf* (Qur'ān 50), *nūn* (Qur'ān 68)

41 × 39 × 1 mm  
1843 6–9 2

## A116



Circular silver disc engraved on both sides in positive.

Side A

O 'Alī (top right) numerals 786. To the left numerals 3 2 2 4 0. Below are the 'seven magical signs'. Below to the right is a rectangle with the numeral 5 repeated three times. To left are the letters *yā' sīn*, repeated three times; these are the 'mysterious letters of the Qur'ān' from *sūra* 36 and they

are followed by the number 115, which is the numerical value of 'Alī. Below are combined letters and numbers *alif* (or 1), 'ayn, 'ayn *alif* (or 1), 5, *šād*. The last line contains the word *Iskandar* (Alexander) with 18 to the right and 1032 to the left.

It is possible that these combinations may stand for the Names of God or other phrases.

Side B

The following groups of 'mysterious' letters are represented here: *kāf hā' yā' 'ayn šād* (Qur'ān 19); *hā' mīm 'ayn sīn qāf* (Qur'ān 42); *hā' mīm ṭā' hā'* (letters from *sūras* 40 and 20 combined) *mīm hā'* enclosing numbers 786322 (top left) and 1032 (right). In the centre are letters *ṭ* 583 and below 1, 0 repeated three times.

At bottom left is a 3 × 3 magical square on its side which contains the sequence of numbers 20 to 28. Each line in whichever direction adds up to 72. The square uses the nine cell *budūḥ* square (see above) with 19 added to each. There are two possible interpretations to the number 72. The first is that the total sum stands for *baṣīṭ*, which equals 72 in the *abjad* system and is one of the Names of God. Alternatively, it could be 19, which is the Name of God *wāḥid* added to each cell of the *budūḥ* square. This is a more popularly used name on amulets than *baṣīṭ*.

2 7	2 0	2 5
2 2	2 4	2 6
2 3	2 8	2 1

30 mm × 1 mm  
1989 3–11 1

## A117



Quartz, rock crystal. Oval, flattish with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Engraved both sides with a 4 × 4 magic square.

Side A:

This consists of a  $4 \times 4$  square with numbers and the letters of the *budūh* square. On either side two of the Names of God: Compassionate (*rahmān*), Merciful (*rahīm*).

Each row of the square (horizontally, vertically and diagonally) calculates to 556. There is no straightforward explanation of 556; however, if we look to the use of Names of God as an interpretation, it may be that it is intended to replicate *rahmān* and *rahīm*, but perhaps with an error, as *rahmān* is 299 while *rahīm* is 258, which added together come to 557. If we substitute *ṣabūr* (298) for *rahmān*, however, then we arrive at 556. Alternatively, the number 556 can be arrived at by adding the number equivalents of 'adl (104), *jāmi*' (114) *wāsi*' (137) *nāfi*' (201), which are inscribed on the other side.

H (8)	272	275	1
274	B (2)	Z (7)	273
J (3)	277	270	W (6)
271	H (5)	D (4)	276

Side B:

The first row contains four of the Beautiful Names: Just ('adl), Uniter (*jāmi*'), Far-reaching (*wāsi*') and Beneficial (*nāfi*').

The numbers and the words combined each make up 556, as on the other side.

'adl (104)	<i>jāmi</i> ' (114)	<i>wāsi</i> ' (137)	<i>nāfi</i> ' (201)
126	202	103	115
203	139	112	102
113	101	204	138

31 × 22 × 6 mm  
1903 11–16 9

## A118



Carnelian, orange banded. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed in positive with the 'seven magical signs'.

15 × 12 × 3 mm  
1878 12–20 68. Christy collection

## A119



Brass arm amulet (*bāzūband*), mid-nineteenth century, probably acquired soon after it was made. Oval with scalloped rim. In the centre is a lion whose body is made up of a  $4 \times 4$  magical square. Undeciphered words make up the inside of his head and rear. A sun with the upper part of a face is behind the lion. The square has a number of errors in it and the correct numbers have been placed in brackets below. Once corrected, the lines each make up the number 1966. If 483 is subtracted from each cell, a perfect  $4 \times 4$  square is achieved, which appears in al-Būnī's *Shams al-Ma'ārif* (al-Būnī n.d.: vol.1, 67).

491	494	497	484
486 (496)	485	49 (490)	490 (495)
486	499	492	489
493	488	487	498 (489)

Version 2 (after subtraction of 483)

8	11	14	1
13	2	7	12
3	16	9	6
10	5	4	15

Except for the area with the magic square and sun, the rest of the armlet is entirely covered with all 15 verses of *Sūrat al-Shams* (sūra 91).

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم والشمس وضحاها  
والقمر اذا تلاها والنهار اذا جلاها والليل  
اذا يغشاها والسماء وما بناها والارض وما  
طحاها ونفس وما سواها فالههما فجورها  
وتقواها قد افلح من زكاها وقد خاب من  
دساها كذبت ثمود بطغواها اذا انبعث  
اشقاها فقل لهم رسول الله ناقة الله وسقياها  
فكدبوه فعفروها فدمدم عليهم ربهم بذنبهم  
فسواها ولا يخاف عقباها

*Basmala*. By the sun and its brightness in the forenoon, by the moon when it follows it, by the day when it shows it, by the night when it covers it, by the heaven and that which built it, by the earth and that which spread it, by a soul and that which formed it, and inspired it [with the knowledge of] what was right and wrong for it! The one who corrupts it will fail. In their impiety, Thamud disbelieved, when the most wretched of them rose up. The messenger of God said to them, '[Respect] the she-camel of God and let her drink'. But they called him a liar, and they hamstrung her. So their Lord punished them for their sin and levelled them. He has no fear of the outcome for them (Qur'ān 91:1–15)

Arm amulets known as *bāzūband* are known from Iran and Iraq. Published examples in silver and brass generally date to the nineteenth century or later. A group in the Khalili collection are variously inscribed with Qur'ānic verses, magic squares and magical signs (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 144–7).



Fodor published a similar example from Iraq (Fodor 1987), while further examples with this motif are published by Tanavoli (2006: 70). The motif of lion and sun has a long history in the Middle East, being principally a zodiacal symbol associated with Leo. In nineteenth-century Iran it became the national symbol of the Qajar rulers, where the lion often brandishes the split sword of Imam 'Alī. In this case the sun symbolism is directly linked to the Sun *sūra* inscribed on the amulet.

97 × 75 mm  
1891 4–18 42

### Brass amulets inscribed in negative

The following amulets, probably dating to the nineteenth century, are inscribed with a variety of texts: the invocation to 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, verses from the Qur'ān, Names of God, names of angels, and magic squares, three of which are Latin squares and are based around two groups of the mysterious letters of the Qur'ān.

#### A120



Octagonal brass plaque. Flat top and base and bevelled sides, inscribed in reverse in cursive script, the inscription divided into four sections, within an ornamental border.

ناد عليا مظهر العجائب تجده عونا لك  
في النوائب كل هم و غم سينجلي بنوبتك  
يا محمد بولايتك يا علي

Lines 1–4: Call upon 'Alī who makes wonders appear, you will find him a help to you in adversity, all care will clear away through your prophethood, O Muḥammad, through your friendship, O 'Alī///

42 × 42 × 4 mm  
1893 2–5 107

#### A121



Round, brass with handle. Inscribed in *nasta'liq* script in reverse with inscriptions which include the Names of God in four segments and a central lozenge.

Centre:

خاتم نبون (?)

Right:

الله احد لا شريك له

Top centre:

لا اله الا الله الملك الحق المبين

Right cartouche:

الاول

Left cartouche:

الآخر

Base:

محمد رسول الله انه كان صادق الوعد  
وكان رسولا نبيا

Lower cartouche right:

الناصر

Lower cartouche left:

الظاهر

Centre:

This is the seal of Nabūn (?)

Right:

Allāh alone He has no partner (*shahāda*)

Top centre:

There is no god but God, the King (*al-malik*), the Manifest Truth (*al-ḥaqq al-mubīn*)

Right cartouche:

The First (*al-awwal*)

Left cartouche:

The Last (*al-ākhir*)

Base:

Muḥammad is the Prophet of God. He was true to his promise and was a messenger and a prophet (Qur'ān 19:54).

Lower cartouche right:

The Helper (*al-nāṣir*)

Lower cartouche left:

The Visible (*al-zāhir*)

Diam.: 54 mm

Height including mount: 45 mm

1893 2–5 96

#### A122



Brass, rectangular with a mount. Inscribed with a magical square in reverse.

Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S	K Q
Y 'ayn	H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M
K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S
'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ
H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn

This is a Latin square (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 107) where the individual letters make up two groups of mysterious letters of the Qur'ān: *kāfhā' yā'* 'ayn *ṣād* (Qur'ān 19) (in bold in the square) and *ḥā' mīm* 'ayn *sīn qāf* (Qur'ān 42). In the first row, *kāfhā' yā'* 'ayn *ṣād* is read from right to left, while *ḥā' mīm* 'ayn *sīn qāf* is read from left to right. In subsequent lines the letters are each in a different order. For a 5 × 5 square with *kāfhā' yā'* 'ayn *ṣād* see Schuster 1972: 20, fig. 2. (In this transcription and in the following example, *kāfhā' yā'* 'ayn *ṣād* have been shown in the upper part of the cell even though in the square itself the letters are either side by side or above each other.)

46 × 46 × 1 mm; overall height 35 mm  
1893 2–5 106

A123



Round, brass seal inscribed with a 5 × 5 magical square in reverse in the centre, with the names of the four archangels on each side: *Jibrā'il*, *Mikā'il*, *Isrā'il*, *'Azrā'il*.

جبرائيل ميكائيل اسرافيل عزرائيل

Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S	K Q
'ayn M	Ş Ḥ	H S	K Q	Y 'ayn
H S	'ayn M	K Q	Y 'ayn	Ş Ḥ
Y 'ayn	K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	H S
K Q	H S	Y 'ayn	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M

As Cat. A122 but the order of the letters has changed.

27 × 27 × 1 mm  
1893 2–5 101

A124



Rectangular metal seal, hooks for suspension originally, now broken off. On side A is a magical square as shown below. On side B are mixed letters and numbers.

Around the margin of both sides are angels' names (the same on both sides), which are not entirely clear. Included are Mikā'il and Ya'jā'il, and other possibilities are Shamka'il, N'ahā'il, Nū'a'il, N'hāyū'il. Angels' names can be made up with an -il ending according to the letters of the alphabet. It has been asserted that each letter has a spiritual name: Ya'jā'il could therefore be the angel of the letter yā' (Canaan 1937: 81–2).

Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S	K Q
K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S
H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M	Y 'ayn
Y 'ayn	H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ	'ayn M
'ayn M	Y 'ayn	H S	K Q	Ş Ḥ

These are the same groups of 'mysterious letters' as in Cat. A122. Here *kāf*, *hā*, *yā*, 'ayn, *ṣād* are in bold in the upper part of each cell.

25 × 25 × 0.5 mm  
1893 2–15 2

A125



Oval metal seal 3 × 3 magical square in negative with the four archangels' names. *Jibrā'il* *Mikā'il* *Isrā'il* *'Azrā'il*

394	399	392
393	395	397
398	391	396

The square is based on the 3 × 3 (*budūh*) square discussed above. Here each cell has had the number 39 added to it, so that each line, row and diagonal adds up to 1185. This is the numerical value of the invocation to

the greatest of the Names of God, *yā ism al-a'zam*.

27 × 25 × 3 mm  
1893 2–15 3

A126



Octagonal metal seal ring with 4 × 4 square in negative with a band of numbers and letters around each side.

D	Ḥ	W	B
W	D	B	Ḥ
B	W	Ḥ	D
Ḥ	B	D	W

This Latin square contains in each cell the letters making up the word *budūh* in different orders (Canaan 1937: 101, fig. 12). However, only in each horizontal and vertical row can *budūh* be read, not in the diagonal. This makes it an 'imperfect' Latin square.

The lines of letters around the sides correspond to the 'linear Kufic' group below.

20 × 16 × 1.5 mm  
OA+ 13423 (D. 2298) Dalton collection



A127



Brass. Round, engraved in negative on both sides. In the centre a small screw-in handle which can be placed in either side.

This is clearly an amulet for stamping onto something in the case of illness. There are six passages from the Qur'an on side A, which contain the word for healing *shafaya*; the  $3 \times 3$  *budūh* square is also known for its healing properties, while the phrase on side B, 'He is not touched by affliction with (the protection of) the name of my Lord,' reinforces this.

Side A:

4	9	2
3	[5]	7
8	1	6

The outer lines of the magic square are made up of the words: the kingdom, the truth, the words of God (?)

جبرائيل ميكائيل اسرافيل عزرائيل

Around the square: the four archangels: Jibrā'il, Mikā'il, Isrāfīl, 'Azrā'il.

Side A

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم ويشف صدور قوم مؤمنين
2. وشفاء لما في الصدور وهدي ورحمة للمؤمنين
3. يخرج من بطونها شراب مختلف الوانه

فيه شفاء للناس

4. وننزل من القرآن ما هو شفاء ورحمة للمؤمنين

5. وإذا مرضت فهو يشفين

6. هو للذين امنوا هدى وشفاء

7. ان في ذلك لاية لقوم يتفكرون

Side B

Margin 1 (outer) in individual letters:

الحمد لله رب العالمين الرحمان الرحيم  
مالك يوم الدين اياك نعبد واياك نستعين  
اهدنا الصراط المستقيم صراط الذين  
انعمت عليهم

Margin 2 (inner) in individual letters:

قل هو الله احد الله الصمد لم يلد ولم يولد  
ولم يكن له كفوا احد

Margin 3 (inside the central field):

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
ليجمعناكم الى يوم القيامة لا ريب فيه  
ومن اصدق من الله حديثا  
وما من دابة في الارض ولا طائر  
يطير بجناحيه

In the Arabic transcription the separate letters are shown with breaks between each.

Side A:

1. *Basmala*. And heal the breasts of a people who believe (Qur'an 9:14)
2. And a remedy for what is in [your] breasts and a guidance and a mercy for the believers (Qur'an 10:57)
3. There comes forth from their bellies a drink of various colours, in which is a healing for men (Qur'an 16:69)
4. We send down as part of the Recitation that which is a healing and a mercy for the believers (Qur'an 17:82)
5. And who heals me when I am sick (Qur'an 26:80)
6. 'For those who believe it is a guidance and a healing...' (Qur'an 41:44)
7. In that there is a sign for people who reflect (Qur'an 16:11)

A knot motif signifies the end of the verses.

Side B:

Margin 1 (outer) in individual letters:

Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all the worlds, the Merciful the Compassionate, Master of the Day of Reckoning. You we serve; to You we turn for help. Guide us on the straight path, the path of those You have blessed (Qur'an 1, Jones translates

'al-'ālimin as 'all created beings')

Margin 2 (inner) in individual letters: Say, 'He is God, One, God, the Eternal, Who has not begotten nor has been begotten. There is no equal to Him' (Qur'an 112)

Margin 3 (inside the central field):

*Basmala*. God there is no god but Him. He will indeed gather you to the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. Who gives truer tidings than God? (Qur'an 4:87)

'There is no beast in the earth nor bird that flies with its wings' (Qur'an 6:38).

'For people in the name of God, 'and He is the hearer and the knower' (Qur'an 2:137, Jones 2007: 41) and elsewhere). 'In the name of God [who is] sufficient. In the name of God [who is] forgiving (?)'

Below the squares:

'In the name of God. He is not touched by affliction with the name of my Lord (i.e. having as protection) on earth and in heaven and He is the All-Seeing All-Knowing'

From *rabbī* this may be a paraphrase of Qur'an 21:4, 'Say my Lord knows every word spoken in the heavens and the earth and He is the All-Seeing All-Knowing.'

Three  $3 \times 3$  squares (starting at the top and left to right) are identical in the disposition of their numbers. They have, however, been rotated so that the numbers appear in different positions. There is a mistake in square 2, where 6 (row 2) should be 2.

1.

6	2	1
7	5	2
4	1	8

2.

8	1	3
6	5	7
4	9	6

3.

2	7	6
1	5	3
8	6	2

4.

2	6	8
3	5	1
6	7	2

## Porter

Long-tailed *botehs*:

*Kaf hā' ya 'ayn šād; ḥā' mīm; 'ayn sīn qāf*

Bottom:

*ḥā' mīm* repeated seven times

Diam.: 70 mm; W: 3 mm  
1893 2–15 1

## Spinning rings

Made of silver and constructed so that they spin, they are generally lozenge-shaped and engraved on both sides with strings of letters or numbers, or schematised illegible inscriptions. In two of the examples, the numbers are enclosed within the cells of six-pointed stars. Similar examples are published in Tanavoli 2006: 68–9.

A128



Silver ring with spinning lozenge-shaped disc inscribed on both sides with rows of illegible numbers and letters.

19 × 14 × 16 mm  
1994 8–5 2. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

A129



Silver ring with spinning lozenge-shaped disc inscribed on both sides with rows of numbers, in the centre around a square. The surface is worn.

28 × 15 × 3.5 mm  
1994 8–5 1. Presented by Sir Denis Wright and acquired in Iran

A130



Made of silver. It has lost its ring. It is engraved with nine rows of mixed numbers and letters on one side, and on the other a six-pointed star divided into twelve cells numbered from 1 to 12. On the sides are two groups of numbers: 1212 on the left and 2121 on the right. All twelve numbers add up to 78. This is the numerical value of the Name of God *al-Ḥakīm*, 'Wise'.

18 × 14 × 4 mm  
OA+ 14339

A131



Made of silver. It has lost its ring. This is a much cruder version of Cat. A130. It is engraved with eight rows of crudely inscribed numerals separated by lines on one side, and on the other a six-pointed star divided into twelve cells, in each of which is number or a letter, with further symbols outside the star.

19 × 15 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14341



### Talismanic discs and the 'lunette script'

These discs are generally characterised by a design of concentric bands which usually take the form of a complete verse around the outer margin, in the case of **Cat. A132–A134**, Qur'ān 2:255, followed by a band of 'lunette script'. This is a term used to describe *sigla* which are found in al-Būnī's *Shams al-Ma'ārif* (al-Būnī n.d.: 223 and elsewhere) and which are thought to originate in Jewish magic. Canaan suggested that the basic principle of the 'lunette script' is that numbers which are ten and over receive one or more 'lunettes' to increase their numerical value. For example 10–90 have one lunette, numbers 100–900 have two lunettes (Doutté 1908: 158–9; Canaan 1938: 141–3).

On the four discs in the collection, the lunette *sigla* are in 19 separate cells, and from the drawings (**A132**) it can be seen that, although there is some variation, in general the shapes conform to a basic pattern. In some of the cells numerals seem clear; for example, in **Cat. A133** cells 9, 16, 17 and 18, the numeral 4. Numerals 1 repeated and 9 are also frequent. It is even possible to see the shapes of words in the cells, such as Muḥammad, or Allāh, but no real solution to the meaning of these *sigla* can at present be found.

The rest of the concentric bands then contain individual letters, often making up the *basmala* or a number of the Names of God. While **Cat. A132–A135** are silver and only engraved on one side, **Cat. A136** is carnelian and has lines of letters and numerals on the back.

An elaborate silver talismanic disc conforming to the same pattern but with the addition of a band of letters in angular script is in the Khalili collection (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997: 131, no. 57). The form of these talismanic discs, whose function is still unknown, appear in magical texts such as *Fālnames* (Farhad and Bağcı 2009: 178), a text of the manuscript of *Kitāb al-durr al-munazzam* by Muḥammad al-Qurashī dated 970/1562 (Bonhams 24 April 2002, lot 38). They also appear on three nineteenth- to twentieth-century talismanic charts in the Khalili collection (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 110ff., nos. 44–5).

A132



Circular metal disc engraved in positive on both sides.

Side A:

Outer margin: There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the messenger of God.

The *shahāda* repeated four times.

Inner margin: 'He' repeated all the way around in reference to God as in *huwa Allāh aḥad*, Qur'ān 2:255.

Central field

This is divided up into eight lines. Mixed letters and numbers.

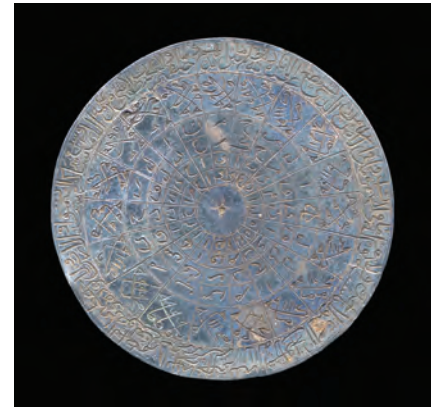
Side B:

In the centre is a rectangle divided into four triangles with groups of letters and *billāh*.

65 × 1 mm

1887 1–15 1

A133



Circular metal disc with cursive inscriptions in positive. (Drawing below.)

Side A: Cursive inscription on two lines in outer margin. Five concentric circles each divided into nineteen sections. (They are described from the outside in. In the case of the individual letters these start in the sections below the *basmala* on the outer ring.)

Band 1.

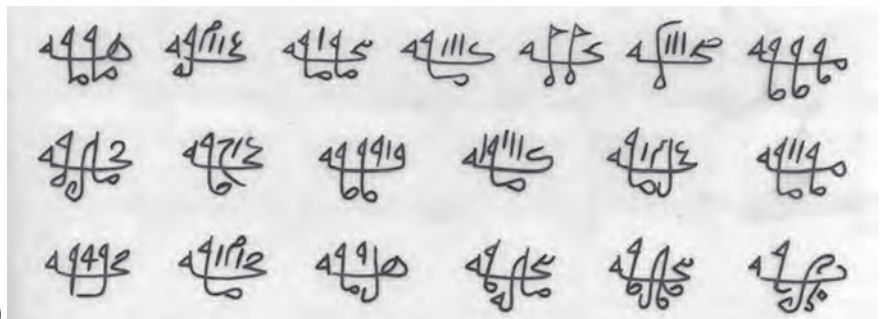
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

*Basmala*. God. There is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep seize Him. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there who intercedes with Him, save by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is after them, while they encompass none of His knowledge apart from that which He wishes. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, and He is not tired of guarding them. He is the Exalted and the Mighty (Qur'ān 2:255)

Band 2. Individual numbers and 'lunette' script in each square.

Band 3. *Basmala* in individual letters.

Band 4. Alone (*fard*), Living (*ḥayy*), Everlasting (*qayyūm*), Judge (*ḥakam*), Just ('*adl*), Most Holy (*quddūs*). Six of the Divine Names in individual letters.



A133 (drawing)

Band 5. Individual letters

Band 6. Individual letters. The first two words appear to be *inn Allāh*.

38 × 0.25 mm

1881 9–9 9. Franks collection

#### A134



Circular metal disc with cursive inscriptions in positive.

Side A: Cursive inscription on two lines in outer margin. Five concentric circles each divided into nineteen sections. (They are described from the outside in.)

Band 1.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

*Basmala*. There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there who can intercede in His presence except as He permits. He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth (from Qur'ān 2:255)

Band 2. Individual numbers and 'lunette' script in each square.

Band 3. *Basmala* in individual letters.

Band 4. Alone (*fard*), Living (*ḥayy*), Everlasting (*qayyūm*), Judge (*ḥakam*), Just ('*adl*), Most Holy (*quddūs*). Six of the Beautiful Names in individual letters.

Band 5. Obscure (different order of letters to A134)

Band 6. Obscure

38 × 0.25 mm

1881 9–9 10. Franks collection

#### A135



Circular metal disc with cursive inscriptions in positive.

Band 1.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم الله لا اله الا هو  
الحي القيوم لا تاخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما  
في السموات وما في الارض من ذا الذي  
يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم ما بين ايديهم  
وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشئ من علمه الا  
بما شاء وسع كرسيه السموات والارض ولا  
يؤده حفظهما وهو العلي العظيم

*Basmala*. 'There is no god but He, the Living, the Self-Subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there who can intercede in His presence except as He permits. He knows what (appears to His creatures as) before or after or behind them. Nor shall they compass anything of His knowledge except as He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth' (from Qur'ān 2:255)

Band 2.

The King (*al-malik*), the Supreme (*al-'aẓīm*), the Very Strong (*al-jabbār*), the Haughty (*al-mutakabbir*), the Vigilant (*al-muḥaymin*), the Dominator (*al-qahhār*), Most High (*al-'ālī*), the Great (*al-kabīr*), the Exalted (*al-muta'ālī*), the Able (*al-qādir*), the Powerful (*al-muqtadir*), the Judge (*al-ḥakam*), the Just (*al-'adal*), the Reckoner (*al-ḥasīb*), the Slow to Anger (*al-ḥalīm*), the Most Mighty (*al-'azīz*), the All-Knowing (*al-khabīr*), the Degradator (*al-mudhill*), the Righteous (*al-mustaqīm*).

Band 3. 'Lunette script'

Band 4. *Basmala* in individual letters

Band 5. Alone (*fard*), Living (*ḥayy*), Everlasting (*qayyūm*), Judge (*ḥakam*), Just ('*adl*), Most Holy (*quddūs*). Six of the Beautiful Names in individual letters.

Band 6. Individual letters: *alif*, *waw*, *mīm*, *kāf*, *alif*, *nūn*, *mīm*, *yā'*, *tā'*, *alif*, *fā'*, *alif*, *yā'*, *yā'*, *nūn*, *alif*, *hā'*

Centre: O Eternal without compare and [there is] nothing like Him. Undeciphered words.

53 × 0.5 mm

C&M 1917 5–4. Presented by Fleming Crooks Esq.

#### A136



Carnelian, orange. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides engraved on both sides in positive. Damaged in places.

Side A:

Outer section in cartouches:  
O Affectionate *wud[ūd]* (?) (alternatively *qaddūs*), O Outstretcher (*bāsiṭ*) (two of the Divine Names)

Band 1. Magical character in each square

Band 2. *Basmala* in individual letters

Band 3. Alone (*fard*), Living (*ḥayy*), Everlasting (*qayyūm*), Judge (*ḥakam*), Just ('*adl*), Most Holy (*quddūs*). Six of the Divine Names in individual letters.

Band 4. Obscure

Band 5 Obscure

Centre reversed:

O Everlasting (*qayyūm*), O Living (*ḥayy*)

Side B:

Seven lines, each with individual numbers and letters

25 × 20 mm

1883 10–31 19. Greville Chester collection



## Magical words, mixed numbers and letters

Among the strange words that appear on amulets are words ending in *-īl* resembling the forms of the angels' names, which were referred to above. Canaan cites a large number of these gleaned from the texts of al-Būnī and others which, he believes, are based on Hebrew angelology (Canaan 1937: 81–3).

There are other strange names of various demons, *jinn* and their helpers who also play an important role on amulets (Canaan 1937: 83–6). Numbers, letters and individual words are also found. Letters in their isolated form and without diacriticals are believed to add power to the amulet. Within the science of letters (*'ilm al-hurūf*, a branch of the Islamic sciences) are descriptions of particular properties of letters. The alphabet is divided into four groups of seven letters corresponding to the four basic elements: fire, air, earth and water. For example, the 'fire' letters (*alif, hā', ṭā', mīm, fā', shīn/sīn*), amongst other functions, ward off evils associated with cold. Letters are connected to the planets and the signs of the Zodiac; there are letters of darkness and light, letters of 'quiet' and 'brotherly love', and their numerical value according to the *abjad* system (Table 4) is all-important.

Included in the use of particular letters for talismanic purposes are the 'mysterious' letters of the Qur'ān and the *sawāqit al-fātiḥa* (the letters not in the *fātiḥa*) referred to above. Sequences of letters and numbers have been isolated by Rehatsek, who identifies certain groups associated with angels and their perfumes. For example, he defines a string of 19 numerals beginning 1 1 9 9 6 as 'the seal of Ruqayil for Sunday and his perfume is frankincense' (Rehatsek 1880: 215).

However, it is virtually impossible to correlate the theory with the practice, and the complexity of the system is encapsulated by al-Būnī, who says, 'It must not be imagined that the secret of the letters can be uncovered with the aid of logical reasoning; it can be reached only through vision and with the aid of divine interpretation'. No attempt has been made here to offer interpretations of the letters and numbers (see Rehatsek 1880; Doutté 1909: 171ff.; Canaan 1937: 89ff.; Fahd, 'Hurūf', EI<sup>2</sup>).

A137



Obsidian black. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides with a cursive inscription in positive. Single line around the edge of the stone.

These invocations are possibly to unidentified angels or demons.

35 mm × 6 mm  
OA+11435

A138



Jasper, black. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides, chipped at the back. Inscription in the centre and around the margin in angular script, some of the letters more rounded.

Centre: Happiness

Margin: *bah, mah, bah, mah, bah*

9 × 2.5 mm  
1893 4–26 166

A139



Orange carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Six sections, containing letters, numbers and words.

Line 1. *mīm* 2 6 9 3 1 4 1 1  
Line 2. By order of God 7 3 1 1 11  
Line 3. 1 3 *mīm* 1 1 1 'Alī  
Line 4. 1 1 2 0 *hā'* 3 2 3 3 3  
Line 5. 2 God, the Beautiful Names  
Line 6. O God, victorious, bless (?)

Lines 5–6 may be interpreted as 'O God victorious! Incline unto God with the Beautiful Names'. The individual letters *hā'* *mīm* are included among the 'mysterious letters of the Qur'ān'.

29 × 25 × 3 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 7

A140



Nephrite jade. Plaque with flat top and sides and lobed base. Mixed letters and numbers and what appear to be some complete words in positive in a central square and around the sides.

49 × 45 × 6 mm  
1867 7–9 7. Greville Chester collection

A141



Chalcedony, white. Oval with bevelled sides. Two rows of numbers engraved in negative separated by a line.

14 × 8.5 × 4.5 mm  
OA+ 14368

A142



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat with sides bevelled down to a narrow base. There is a hole in the centre and it is damaged on one side. Letters and numbers combined on four lines in positive.

14 × 14 × 5.5 mm  
1943 10–9 8. Godwin-Austen collection

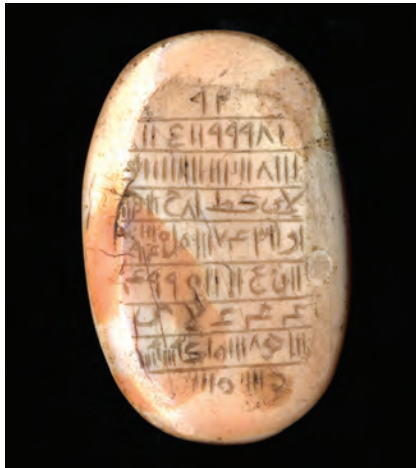
A143



Glass, colourless. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Figure of eight with loops within it filled with letters and numbers and undeciphered complete words in the lower circles in positive. The only possibly recognisable word is 'ajal', 'speed', in the centre of the lower loop, used to hasten the power of the amulet.

19 × 12 × 5 mm  
1853 3–28 73. Auckland collection

A144



Agate, orange and white. Partially whitened, probably during burial. Nine lines of numbers and letters in positive.

Line 8. He is God alone (from Qur'ān 112)

39 × 25 × 13 mm  
1874 8–5 62

A145



Carnelian, orange. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Damaged in places. Mixed letters and numbers on four lines. The last line, which is wider than the others, contains undeciphered words.

10 × 8 × 2 mm  
1853 3–28 4. Auckland collection

A146



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Five sections with mixed numbers and letters engraved in reverse. At the end of the fourth line is possibly the word 'ajal', 'speed'.

14 × 13.5 × 2 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 8

A147



Carnelian, orange. Octagonal, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Inscribed with rows of letters numbers and undeciphered words.

20.5 × 19.5 × 4.5 mm  
OA+ 14238

A148



Nephrite, jade. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Mostly letters and some numbers engraved in positive. All heavily underlined except for line 5.

20 × 17 × 4 mm  
1863 10–13 18

A149



Lapis lazuli, blue. Round, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Five lines of mixed numbers and letters.

11 × 11 × 3 mm  
OA+ 14278



A150



Bronze. Round, pierced at the base, was once pierced at the top. Engraved with lines of numerals on both sides.

45 × 2 mm

C&M 1874 5–1 2. Found at Ephesus (see 'Seals and amulets from archaeological sites' in the Introduction, for the excavations at Ephesus).

A151



Brass amulet holder. Mixed inscription, numbers and letters.

43 × 8 × 6 mm  
1861 12–21 3

## 'Linear Kufic'

This group of amulets is characterised by angular letters forms joined together creating an artificial base line. Individual words cannot easily be differentiated within the lines, and even when there are breaks the meaning is generally unclear. This style was one of a number of magical scripts discussed by Casanova (1921) who described it as '*koufique linéaire*', and this term has been adopted here (see also Porter 2009 and 2010). Sometimes the lines are combined with single letters inscribed in their 'isolated' form, which, as mentioned above, in magic are believed to be more powerful, as writing letters without dots and in their isolated form is believed to hasten the action of a spell (Canaan 1937: 96ff.). These inscriptions appear on amulets engraved in positive or negative made in different materials, including a significant number in rock crystal which are inscribed in reverse and are discussed below. These strings of letters also appear on paper amulets (Kriss 1962: figs. 94–6) and on associated magical objects such as medieval bronze animals (Adler 1782: pl. x), magic bowls, of which some of the earliest dated examples are from the late twelfth century (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 72ff., e.g. cat. no. 25), and mirrors (Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 131). Their 'magical' character is emphasised by the fact that on the magic bowls and some amulets, for example, these 'inscriptions' are juxtaposed against recognisable Qur'ānic or other benedictory inscriptions. Canaan, who discusses the phenomenon of these magic words (1937: 89–95), concludes that they are either derived from a foreign language such as Greek or Syriac, or that they represent combinations of letters arranged according to mystic principles. 'The aim of the sorcerer is to impress his clients with unknown words of a curious, strange and unknown pronunciation' (Canaan 1937: 95).

A152



Bronze, square and flat. Five lines (reversed).

17 × 17 × mm

1861 12–21 19. Purchased from Julius Richard (see Introduction, p. 13).

A153



Cast bronze ring with rectangular bezel. Worn with traces of letters in continuous lines.

20 × 21 mm; overall length 25 mm  
OA+ 14168

A154



Bronze, oval and flat. Dashes in lines attempting to resemble an inscription.

19 × 14 × 2 mm  
OA+ 14342

A155



Rectangular black stone, with hole for suspension. Engraved on both sides in reverse.

Side A: Three lines of script

Side B: Script around a square with a word in the centre. Undeciphered (*hiba?*).

26 × 24 × 7.5 mm  
OA+ 13496

A156



Haematite. Oblong, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Two lines of angular script in reverse with forked terminals. Undeciphered.

17 × 11 × 2.5 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 10

A157



Goethite. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. It is engraved on both sides. Four lines of angular script on one side and three figures on the other.

20 × 19 × 5 mm  
OA+13505

A158



Jasper. Rectangular, flat top and base with bevelled sides. It is engraved in reverse with a single line of simple angular script belonging stylistically with the early group (c. ninth to tenth century). While this could perhaps contain a phrase of the type described in Chapter 4, 'Phrases', it has not been possible to decipher it, and the item is therefore tentatively placed with this group.

20 × 19 × 5 mm  
1819 7–9 6

## Rock crystal seals inscribed in 'linear Kufic'

A significant number of the amulets with 'linear Kufic' inscriptions are made of rock crystal. The British Museum group contributes to a growing number of these objects which are found in collections such as that of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kalus 1981: 93–98), with a large number in the Zucker collection. They have in common the combination of the strings of letters and isolated letters; sometimes similar configurations of letters can be detected, but of the examples studied not one is exactly the same as the other. They sometimes include words such as '*ajal*', 'hurry', 'haste' – as noted above (Cat. A143, A146), one of a number of words used to hasten the action of a spell (Canaan 1937: 94; al-Būnī n.d.: 244, for example). Kalus put forward the theory that certain words appearing within the lines could be associated in some way with water, which led him to suggest that these objects would have been used to induce rain or draw water into wells (Kalus 1987; for further discussion, see Porter 2009).

As is the case with much of the material catalogued here, it is difficult to provide clear dates. The forms of the letters ought to offer a clue as these are often in angular Kufic style; the shape of the letter *hā'* (A160), for example, is particularly striking, as it is one of the forms that appears as early as the Dome of the Rock inscriptions 72/691 (Blair 1992), while the form of the *hā'* or *jīm* at the beginning of the second line of side B of A161 has parallels with tenth-century forms (Arif 1967: 11, inscription dated 306/918–9). However, this is complicated by the fact that we know that archaic forms have continued to be used for magical inscriptions.

Another obvious question is that of provenance. Fine carving of rock crystal is often associated with the Fatimids; the rock crystal seal of the Fatimid secretary Fahd ibn Ibrāhīm (Tresors 1998: 140, no. 84) noted above (Introduction, pp. 1 and 7) bears epigraphic similarities. However, rock crystal was also used elsewhere in medieval times, for example in Iran (Contadini 1998: 16–38).



A159



Rock crystal. Oval with straight sides, flat with bevelled sides. Three lines of angular script with forked terminals continuously joined in reverse.

كيف يخلق النار [...] نار امير المؤمنين قسيما

Side A: And how is fire created from [...] the fire of the Commander of the Faithful. A share of it/measure it?

Although this seal contains more legible words than the other examples in this group, there are sections of the inscription which remain elusive. It relates closely to the other examples in terms of both the epigraphy (the forked terminals, the letter *khā'* of *khalāqa*, and the *jim*, *hā'* or *khā'* on side B, line 2 of Cat. A160) and the continuously joined words. The meaning is far from clear here. Is the reference to Amīr al-Mu'minīn to a specific caliph? For the *Ḥadīth* reference to 'ahl al-nār' see Introduction note 8; for a seal with references to fire, see Cat. 367.

14 × 10 × 2.5 mm  
1878 12–20 127

A160



Rock crystal. Rectangular, flat with bevelled sides. Engraved in reverse on both sides with angular script in continuous lines and letters in isolated form, with forked terminals.

17 × 15 × 3.5 mm  
Marsden collection, no. 1

A161



Rock crystal. Triangular, engraved one side only on three lines with angular letters and a five-pointed star.

سبحانك  
حيا ييا طا  
حدو

Praise to thee (O God)...

18 × 15 × 7 mm  
OA+ 14325

(Porter 2009: 146)

A162



Rock crystal. Round, engraved on both sides in reverse.

Side A: Three lines of continuous script.

Side B: In the centre a triangle with loops on the corners resembling lunette script.

15 × 14 × 8 mm  
1883 10–31 16

(Porter 2009: 150)

A163



Rock crystal. Round with slightly convex top. Engraved in reverse with three lines of angular script.

15 × 14 × 8 mm  
1883 10–31 17

(Porter 2009: 140)

A164



Rock crystal. Convex top and flat base with bevelled sides. Engraved on both sides in angular script in reverse, five lines on one side and two on the other.

22 × 21 × 6 mm  
1878 12–20 28

(Porter 2009: 140)

A165



Rock crystal. Oval with convex top and flat base. Three lines of angular script in reverse. The surface is worn.

18 × 13 × 7 mm  
1878 12–20 29

A166



Rock crystal. Round with flat base. Four lines of angular script in the centre and another in a circle around engraved in reverse.

22 × 11 mm  
1853 3–28 89

A167



Quartz, rock crystal. Oval with three facets. Image of a bull with a seated figure on one face and a man holding a spear on the other. Continuous lines of angular script. This is likely to be pre-Islamic and re-engraved.

33 × 14 × 9 mm  
OA+ 7436. Talbot collection T505

## Lions and scorpions

A168



Clay bulla, damaged on the bottom right hand corner.

The central design is of a rampant lion, or a dog, facing a scorpion under three six-pointed stars and surrounded on all sides by two lines of 'linear Kufic' which in some places appears to bear some resemblance to the *shahāda*. Maddison and Savage-Smith has suggested that, while the overall significance of the designs remains elusive, the lion and scorpion may represent the zodiacal signs of Scorpio and Leo, whose associations go back to the pre-Islamic Mesopotamian traditions. The image is found on Sasanian seals (Bivar 1969: 73–4). In the Islamic context, a story in the *Ghāyat al-Hakīm*, a medieval text on magic known in the west as *Picatrix*, describes seals bearing the image of a scorpion 'engraved while the moon was in the second face of Scorpio' as having wondrous powers (Matton 1977: 245).

The design on this clay bulla, which is dateable to the early Islamic period, perhaps c. eighth to ninth century, can be found on amulets (Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 138 cat. nos. 77–8) and on the backs of a number of medieval Iranian mirrors (Melikian-Chirvani 1982: 131, cat. no. 59; Maddison and Savage-Smith 1997, vol. 1: 138, cat. no. 79; BM 1891 4–18 41). The motif in all of these examples is surrounded by bands of 'linear Kufic'. In the case of the British Museum mirror, a sun appears in the left corner as well as lines of cursive script, which Kalus (1987b: 104) suggested contained words associated with rain.

Diam.: 29 mm  
C&M 1991 7–27 4

A169



Carnelian. Oval, flat top and base with bevelled sides. Engraved with the figure of a man riding a lion. A series of letters underneath.

26 × 17 × 3.5 mm  
OA+ 13500

A170



Stone amulet mould, probably obsidian, acquired in Iraq.

6 × 5.8 mm  
1921 05–11 1

This is part of a mould that would have been used to make a cylindrical amulet with the lost wax casting method. From the wax, a clay core would have been made from which the metal amulet would have been produced. The runnels at the top were used to pour in the wax and the pieces of the mould were held in place with pegs. The durability of the material ensured that despite its fine decoration it could have been frequently re-used. The designs consist of the repetition of the words, 'yā (O) 'Ālī', and scratched across the top are the words 'O 'Ālī, through God'. Moulds such as this are rare, and this item is comparable to a mould in the Ashmolean Museum acquired in Syria (Spink 1986: 9).

### Note

- 1 I am particularly grateful to Dr Hans Kind for his help on the amulets with magic squares.



# Identification of the Materials of the Seals and Amulets

Sylvia Humphrey and Janet Ambers

## Introduction

Approximately 800 of the seals and amulets were examined using a variety of techniques to identify their constituent materials. Because of the nature of the objects and their generally very good state of preservation, it was necessary to use analytical techniques which were totally non-destructive or required the removal of only very small samples. In some cases this limited the precision of identification which was possible. The detailed results for the individual seals have been incorporated into the catalogue entries. Included in this account are the identifications of 27 seals examined previously by Margaret Sax (unpublished Laboratory Report, 6309, dated 8 October 1992).

## Methodology

Initially, the seals were examined visually, with the aid of a hand lens and a binocular microscope, and many, particularly those consisting of varieties of quartz (see below), were identified on the basis of these observations. Estimates of relative *hardness* (H), using Mohs' scale, were useful in some instances to support the visual identification of a material. When visual identification was not possible, seals were usually analysed by *X-ray diffraction analysis* (XRD). This technique requires the removal of only a very small powder sample from the seal (usually taken from a blemish or from the reverse of the seal); the XRD pattern, recorded on film in a Debye-Scherrer camera, is characteristic of the mineral phases present.

Various gemmological tests were also used. The *polariscope* is a gemmological instrument which contains two sheets of polaroid film oriented in the crossed polars position, so that when gem materials are examined, a variety of optical effects may be seen, depending on the particular optical properties of the material. For instance, when glass is examined, it may appear dark in all orientations, whereas rock crystal will appear alternately dark and light as the stone is rotated in the polariscope. Many translucent cryptocrystalline materials, for example chalcedony, will appear light in all orientations.

A *spectroscope*, an instrument which is used to observe the absorption spectra of gem materials, was used to support the visual identification of certain red/purple seals as garnet. The spectroscope consists of either a diffraction grating or a prism-train contained in a sealed tube. A strong light source is used to illuminate the stone under examination. When viewed through a spectroscope, a series of dark lines or bands may be observed, cutting across the visible spectrum. The positions of these dark absorption bands are characteristic of particular minerals. The refractive indices of several of the garnet seals were determined with the aid of a *refractometer*, as a further check on their identity.

The *streak test* was used occasionally. In this, the edge of the seal was gently drawn for a short distance across an unglazed porcelain tile, leaving behind a streak of powdered mineral. The

technique is useful, for example, to distinguish between two iron oxide minerals, hematite, which has a distinctive cherry red streak, and goethite, which has a yellow brown streak.

Air-path *X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analysis* was used to provide qualitative/semi-quantitative chemical analyses of some of the seals. This non-destructive technique was used particularly to obtain analyses of the metal seals, allowing the various alloy types to be identified (see below), but XRF was less useful for the identification of the stone and mineral seals, because it does not detect the lighter elements. However, XRF was used to analyse coatings on some of the quartz seals (see below).

## Materials

Brief descriptions of the materials encountered are given below. For more detailed information, reference should be made to mineralogical texts such as Deer, Howie and Zussman (1982) or Webster (1983).

### Quartz

The classification of the quartz seals is based on the system of nomenclature devised by Sax and Middleton (1992), and amended by Sax (1996). The quartz group of materials can conveniently be divided into two main types, according to whether they are coarse grained (macrocrystalline: 'macroquartz'), or fine grained (microcrystalline or cryptocrystalline: 'microquartz'). Both subgroups may be further subdivided into varieties and subvarieties.

### Microcrystalline quartz

This term is often used interchangeably with chalcedony, a term that is also applied more narrowly to those varieties which are devoid of distinct banding or patterning, and are typically pale in colour. Naturally occurring dark coloured chalcedony is rare. A black colour (**Cat. 589**) may be induced by boiling chalcedony in a sugar solution, followed by immersion in sulphuric acid, which results in the deposition of finely divided black carbon in the interstices of the stone (Webster 1983: 469). Pliny (see Eichholz 1962: 323) described a rather similar technique to enhance the colour of chalcedony, which was boiled in honey, the acidic Corsican variety being favoured for this process. Nassau (1984: 67) suggests that a final heating step might have been used to char the acidic honey, thus giving a dark colour, without recourse to sulphuric acid.

Most microcrystalline quartz is translucent but jasper, which is usually red, yellow or brown, and bloodstone, which is typically green with red or yellow spots or streaks, are opaque. Plasma is also opaque and of a dark green colour; this material has sometimes been referred to as green jasper (e.g. **Cat. 46**). The following varieties of microquartz were recognised among the seals examined:

Chalcedony	white, yellow, green, blue, purple, pink and pale brown; black (?treated)
Carnelian	orange and red-brown
Sard	brown
Agate	distinctly banded, various colours
Onyx	alternate bands of black/dark brown and white
Sardonyx	alternate bands of brown/red and white
Carnelian onyx	alternate bands of orange and white
Plasma	opaque, dark green
Bloodstone	opaque, dark green with red and/or yellow spots
Jasper	opaque, a heavily pigmented impure variety, typically red, black, yellow or brown.

### ***Etched chalcedony***

A number of the chalcedony (and carnelian) seals have white etched surfaces (e.g. **Cat. 34**). This effect may have been either induced deliberately, using a combination of an alkali and heat, or be incidental, perhaps resulting from burial in an alkaline environment. These processes typically result in whitening and sometimes an increase in opacity of the stone; networks of fine cracks on the surface may indicate that the effect has been deliberately induced by heating. Some stones show only traces of opaque white discolouration, perhaps indicating that they have been repolished.

Several carnelian and chalcedony objects have etched rather than incised inscriptions (e.g. **Cat. A68**); this effect may be achieved by painting an alkaline paste on to the stone, which is then baked (Reade 1979). The areas covered by the paste are decoloured by this process.

### ***Macrocrystalline quartz***

As the name implies, the individual crystals of which this type of quartz is composed are larger than those which make up microcrystalline quartz. Objects may be composed of single crystals, (e.g. rock crystal), or aggregates of smaller crystals (e.g. aventurine, a variety of quartzite, not seen in this study). Macrocrystalline quartz is generally transparent. Two varieties were encountered.

**Rock crystal:** colourless, transparent. Sometimes contains distinctive inclusions of minerals such as tourmaline.

**White/milky quartz:** white, translucent. A milky effect results from the presence of numerous microscopic cavities.

Rock crystal may resemble glass but it was usually possible to distinguish between these materials using gemmological instruments such as the polariscope, and also by the nature of internal inclusions. A type of inclusion that is commonly found in rock crystal, for example seal **Cat. 326**, consists of a cavity containing two phases; a gas and a fluid. Inclusions of fine black acicular tourmaline crystals may also be present in quartz and were identified in amulet **Cat. A117**. On the other hand, the observation of a hollow spherical bubble in **Cat. 497** and swirl marks in **Cat. A143** indicated that both of these seals consist of glass (see below).

### ***Coated seals of quartz***

Two of the quartz seals appear to have been coated with blue material. A turquoise coloured material is retained chiefly in the incised inscription and on the edges of seal **Cat. 227** (white chalcedony), although the coating may have originally covered the entire surface (there are traces on the reverse of the seal). XRF analysis indicated that the blue colour is derived from copper. Beck

(1934, 1935) describes how this effect may be achieved by coating the seal stone with a mixture of an alkali and malachite (copper carbonate) and then heating to form a blue glaze. Seal **Cat. 191** consists of rock crystal, with traces of what may have originally been a continuous coating of a vivid blue transparent glaze, but which is now concentrated near the upper edges of the convex base. There is no evidence of this material on the face of the seal. Analysis by XRF detected copper and cobalt as the most likely colouring agents.

### ***Iron oxide minerals***

#### **HEMATITE**

Hematite is a dark grey to black opaque iron oxide, which has a metallic lustre, and takes a good polish. The distinctive cherry red streak of this mineral provides a useful test which enables it to be distinguished from goethite and black jasper. In some cases identification was confirmed by XRD analysis. A single example of impure hematite, which has a red-brown colour and streak, was also analysed by XRD and shown to consist predominantly of hematite in a clay-rich matrix (probably kaolinite).

#### **GOETHITE**

This hydrated iron oxide may resemble haematite, although it is more typically brown to yellow in colour, with a matt lustre (e.g. **Cat. 207**). The yellow brown streak of goethite serves to distinguish it from hematite. Identification was supported by XRD.

#### **MIXED GOETHITE AND HAEMATITE**

Several examples were found of this combination of the two minerals (e.g. **Cat. 68**), which may show a layered structure.

### ***Garnet***

Garnet is a family name for a group of silicate minerals. Two of the seals, **Cat. 73 and 41**, were analysed by XRD, and tentatively identified as almandine, the iron-rich variety. Two additional stones, **Cat. 51 and 81**, which were analysed by XRF, were shown to be iron-rich, and are probably also almandine. Garnets of this composition are typically red to purple in colour; the distinctive absorption spectrum and high refractive index of these stones are also characteristic.

### ***Nephrite***

Nephrite is one of the two principal jade minerals (the other is jadeite, but this was not seen here). Nephrite is an amphibole mineral, with a chemical composition between tremolite, a hydrated calcium magnesium silicate, and actinolite, a hydrated calcium magnesium iron silicate. In the darker green material (e.g. **Cat. 456**), iron is more abundant than magnesium, whereas the opposite is true for the paler material (Webster 1983). Grey (e.g. **Cat. 410**) and brown (e.g. **Cat. A85**) varieties are also common. Nephrite is compact, exceptionally tough and relatively hard (H of 6.5) and takes a good polish, unlike some jade simulants. Visually, it may resemble serpentinite, chlorite and chalcedony. The examples here were identified by XRD analysis.

### ***Saussurite***

One of the seals (**Cat. 390**) was found by XRD to consist mainly of clinozoisite. This mineral is a member of the epidote group and is a major constituent of saussurite, a rock which has been widely used as a jade simulant.



### **Lapis lazuli (lazurite)**

The distinctive blue colour of this material (e.g. **Cat. 79**) is derived from the mineral lazurite, a sodium aluminium silicate containing sulphur. It is often impure, other constituents may include calcite, hauyne, sodalite and brassy specks of pyrite. Lapis lazuli (lazurite) has a pale blue streak, by which it may be distinguished from blue glass. Identifications were supported by XRD analysis.

### **Serpentine**

Serpentine is the name given to rocks composed mainly of serpentine minerals, a group of hydrated magnesium silicates. It is most commonly green, black, brown or red in colour, and is often banded; it is usually opaque but some varieties may be translucent. Inclusions of spinel (usually magnetite or chromite) are common, for example in **Cat. 252**. Serpentine is of rather variable hardness (H of 4–6), and has a waxy lustre. The term bowenite has been applied to the translucent pale green variety which is a common jade simulant, and is harder than most other varieties of serpentine. XRD analysis was used to confirm the identification of this material.

### **Chlorite**

Chlorite is the name applied to a group of hydrated magnesium iron aluminium silicate minerals, which may occur in metamorphic, igneous and sedimentary rocks. Shades of green are typical (e.g. **A36**), although brown and black material also occurs. Chlorite can be identified by XRD but it is very soft (H of 2–2.5), a feature which helps to distinguish it from serpentine (H of 4–6).

### **Talc-chlorite rock**

This compact fine grained black and white speckled metamorphic rock (e.g. **Cat. 431**) is composed of talc, a hydrated magnesium silicate, and clinochlore, a magnesium-rich variety of chlorite, identified by XRD analysis.

### **Amphibolite**

Amphibolite (**Cat. 228**) is a metamorphic rock which consists of amphibole and plagioclase feldspar. These rocks are usually green in colour. Identification was supported by the XRD analysis.

### **Fine-grained igneous rock**

A very fine grained igneous rock, consisting of a brown groundmass with fine white crystals, probably feldspar. Examination of the single seal in this material (**Cat. 51**) using a binocular microscope enabled it to be distinguished from the metal seals, some of which it resembles. XRD analysis indicated the presence of feldspar and quartz.

### **Limestone**

A sedimentary rock which consists predominantly of calcite (calcium carbonate). The two objects (**Cat. 438 and A11**) identified as consisting of limestone are both very fine grained. Seal **Cat. 438** also contains some quartz. Both seals were analysed by XRD.

### **Shell (Aragonite)**

Shell is composed of organic (conchiolin) and inorganic (aragonite) materials. It has a layered microstructure, which can be seen in **Cat. 136**. Aragonite was identified by XRD.

### **Metasiltstone**

This fine grained metamorphic rock (**Cat. 214**) is composed mainly of quartz, with some feldspar and chlorite, identified by XRD. The grey-green colour is probably derived from the chlorite.

### **Ironstone**

A sedimentary rock, consisting of quartz grains in an iron-rich clay matrix (e.g. **Cat. 418**). Identified by XRD.

### **Glass**

Glass consists largely of silica, with the addition of metal oxides. It lacks the ordered atomic structure of crystalline materials and related directional properties, enabling it to be distinguished from rock crystal and other gem varieties by simple gemmological tests. Of the seals analysed by XRF, **Cat. A143**, which resembles rock crystal, appears to be a potash-lead-silica glass. ‘Crystal’ glasses of this type were not generally introduced until the late seventeenth century in western Europe although they may have been used slightly earlier in Italy and also in China. This type of glass does not seem to have been produced in the Islamic world before the modern period. A purple seal, **Cat. 502**, is a lime-silica glass coloured by manganese. A group of four cameo glass seals each consist of a thick lower layer of translucent purple glass, overlain by a thin layer of opaque white glass surmounted by a thin purple layer through which the inscription has been cut to reveal the underlying white glass. .

### **Obsidian**

Two dark brown/black amulets (**A8 and A138**) have been tentatively identified as obsidian, a naturally occurring volcanic glass. Chemical analysis by XRF is consistent with this, and the results, whilst not conclusive, suggest that these glassy seals are not of man-made glass.

### **Metal**

With a single exception, all of the metal seals were analysed semi-quantitatively by XRF, and the results obtained used to assign the seals to the categories set out below.

Unalloyed copper	copper that typically contains less than 1% of other metals.
Low tin bronze	copper alloyed with a small quantity of tin, probably up to 5%.
Tin bronze	an alloy consisting of copper and significant amounts of tin, probably in excess of 5%.
Leaded tin bronze	an alloy of copper and tin containing significant amounts of lead, possibly in excess of 1%.
Silver-copper alloy	an alloy of the two metals, in which there is usually a higher concentration of silver.
Iron	ferrous metal
Brass	an alloy of copper and significant amounts of zinc, probably more than 5%.
Leaded brass	brass containing significant amounts of lead, possibly in excess of 1%.
Low zinc brass	copper alloyed with a small amount of zinc, probably less than 5%.

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Leaded low zinc brass	low zinc brass containing significant amounts of lead, possibly in excess of 1%.
Arsenical copper	copper alloyed with arsenic, probably in excess of 1%.
Leaded gunmetal	an alloy of copper zinc and tin, with significant amounts of lead, probably in excess of 5%.

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# Methods of Engraving

Margaret Sax and Nigel Meeks

## Introduction and methods of examination

The analytical programme reported by Sylvia Humphrey shows that varieties of quartz were frequently worked as Arabic and Persian seals and amulets; carnelian was particularly popular. The semi-precious varieties of quartz are relatively hard (with a Mohs' scale of hardness, H of 7) and difficult to work. They require specialised techniques of carving, for example, using metal tools together with a lubricant (water or oil) and a fine abrasive sand that is harder than quartz, such as emery, an impure microcrystalline variety of the mineral corundum (H of 9), or diamond (H of 10). Despite their hardness, almost all the quartz seals were minutely and precisely engraved with an inscription in reverse so that when used for sealing, the inscription could be read.

The fine detail preserved on the carved features of hard stone artefacts is ideal for the study of ancient lapidary technology. In an earlier investigation of the engraving of Chalcolithic to early Iron Age, quartz cylinder seals from Mesopotamia and surrounding areas of the Middle East, dating from c. 3000 BC to c. 400 BC, optical and scanning electron microscopy (SEM) were used to examine the intaglios worked in their curved sides (Sax *et al.* 1995). Comparison of the morphology of the tool marks of carved features with that of experimental standards enabled the use of various tools and techniques to be recognised on the seals (Sax *et al.* 1998).

The results of examining cylinder seals showed that the most significant advance to have been made in Mesopotamian lapidary technology was the introduction of engraving wheels (Sax *et al.* 2000). The high speed cutting action created by rotary motion at the rim of these disc-shaped tools facilitated the working of hard stones, and a marked increase in quartz usage occurred with or immediately after the transition to a predominantly wheel-based engraving technology. The lapidary wheel was first used in Mesopotamia during the 2nd millennium BC, c. 1750–1595, and efficient methods of wheel-cutting were established sometime between c. 1400 and the end of the reign of Kurigalzu II in 1308. Prior to this, the quartz seals were engraved by simple pecking (or flaking) techniques using small pointed tools; they were also worked with files and drills. The wheels, and most other tools, were metal, copper or a copper-based alloy, and usually charged with an emery abrasive mix; iron was available as a tool material in the 1st millennium BC. In contrast to drills, which may be hand-held, for example over a capstone and rotated, the use of wheels is dependant on devices similar in function to lathes. The methods of wheel-cutting developed in Mesopotamia were probably somewhat similar to the traditional methods of seal engraving used in Persia, which were documented by Chardin during the seventeenth century (Penzer 1927: 273): small copper wheels, charged with an emery/corundum mix, were mounted in turn on the shaft (or spindle) of a lathe and rotated with a bow. By

the mid-twentieth century a diamond was set at one end of the engraving spindle (Wulff 1966: 38): an apprentice rotated the spindle at *great speed* with a bow whilst the master held the gem stone against the rotating diamond, moving the gem stone carefully to follow the design. Recent, electrically-driven lathes were described by Sinkankas (1984: 228–45). The Mughal jeweller's lathe is illustrated and discussed below.

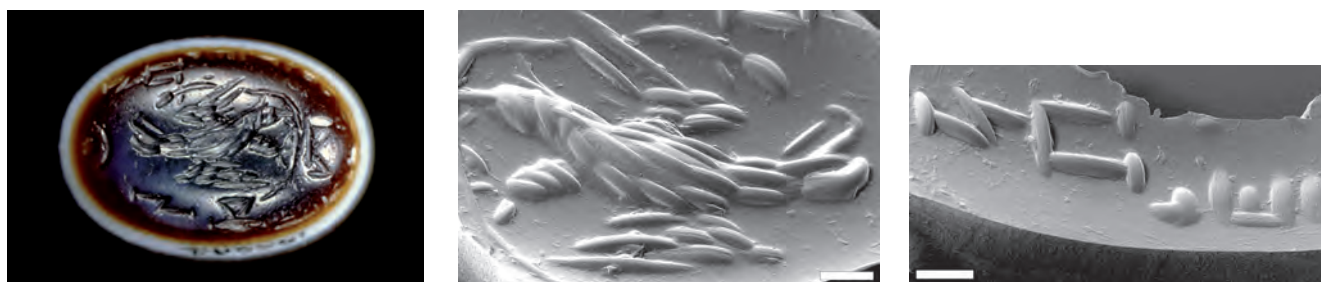
The opportunity was taken to investigate the engraving of a small sample of the seals in the present catalogue. Initially, the intaglios of twelve seals, covering a wide chronological range and various seal materials, were examined for tool marks with an optical microscope. Some of the inscriptions were obscured by inlays or deposits of wax and ink remaining from previous sealing, and six seals, the carved features of which could clearly be seen, were selected for more detailed examination by SEM. Details of the six seals are given in the **Table** below.

Cat. no.	Seal no.	Date (AD) of engraving	Material of seal
Cat. 367	1854 4-1 23	c. 3rd–6th century & c. 8th century	Sardonyx (quartz)
Cat. 177	1878.12-20 11	c. 8th century	Sardonyx (quartz)
Cat. 96	1880-3652	c. 9th century	Haematite
Cat. 38	1878 12-20 78	c. 9th century	Bronze
Cat. 390	OA+ 14256	c. 15th century (or later)	Saussurite
Cat. 492	OA+ 14378	1757–58	Carnelian (quartz)

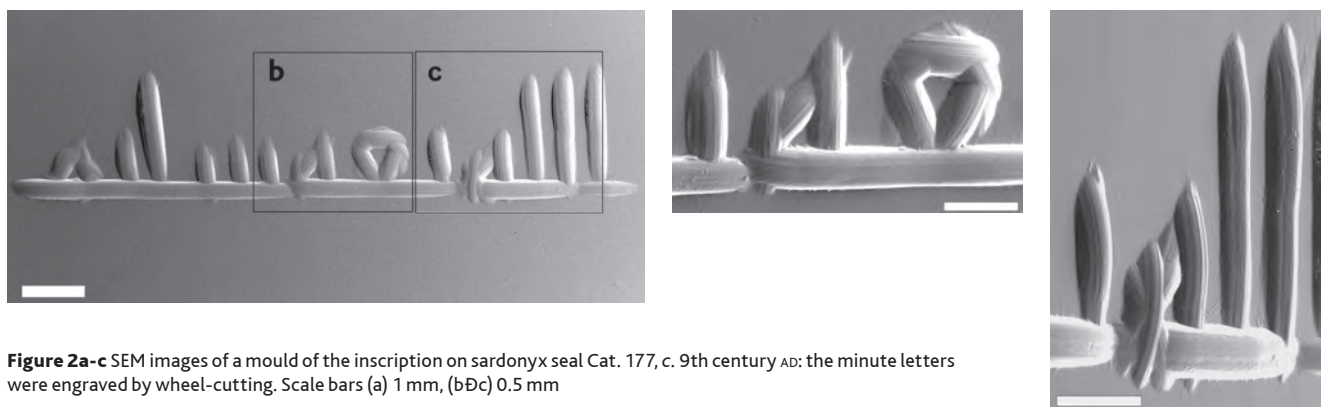
In order to avoid any risk of damage to the seals by direct observation in the SEM, detailed impressions of the tool marks were made with dental silicone moulding material. The moulds were then coated in gold suitable for SEM examination. Features engraved into the seals protrude upwards on the moulds, facilitating observation of their depth, as demonstrated in the SEM micrographs in the following section.

## Observations and Interpretations

Moulds of the sardonyx South Arabian seal, Cat. 367, c. third–sixth century AD (**Fig. 1a**), are shown in **Figs 1b and 1c**. The eagle (**Fig. 1b**), engraved into the dome of this cabochon seal, comprises numerous linear and curved features; regular parallel fine grooves or striations are present along the features. It is additionally apparent that the profiles along the moulded features are convex, reflecting their concave depth in the seal. This set of characteristics is consistent with the use of small rotary wheels and an abrasive mix (Sax *et al.* 1998). Relatively thick disc-shaped tools were initially used to block out the body of the eagle. Finer details, such as feathers, were then added with thinner discs: the moulded convex profiles indicate that the tool was c. 2 mm in diameter. A mould of the inscription around the edge of the seal is seen in **Fig. 1c**: on the left-hand side, the epigraphic South Arabian letters forming the name *Nadim* were also wheel-cut.



**Figure 1a–c** (a) Sardonyx seal Cat. 367, c. 3rd–6th century AD. (b–c) SEM images of moulds of (b) the eagle and (c) two inscriptions in the seal: the convex profiles of the moulded features are consistent with the use of rotary engraving wheels. Scale bars 1 mm



**Figure 2a–c** SEM images of a mould of the inscription on sardonyx seal Cat. 177, c. 9th century AD: the minute letters were engraved by wheel-cutting. Scale bars (a) 1 mm, (b,c) 0.5 mm

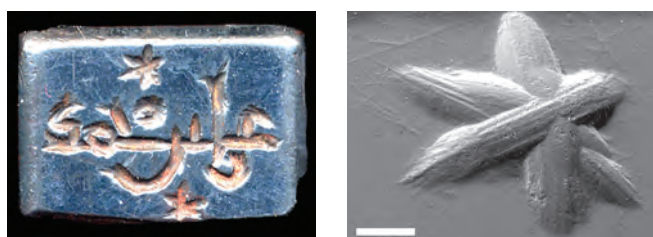
Details of a later Arabic inscription in the angular style of Kufic script are seen on the right-hand side of **Fig. 1c**. This is thought to have been added to the South Arabian seal in about the eighth–ninth century. The letters are similar to those of the inscription in the sardonyx early Islamic seal Cat. 177 of c. ninth-century AD date, a mould of which is shown in **Fig. 2a**. The minute letters of these inscriptions vary in height from c. 0.6 mm to c. 2 mm. Those highlighted in **Figure 2a** are seen at higher magnifications in **Figures 2b** and **2c**; in these oblique views of the mould, convex profiles are seen along the features, consistent with wheel-cutting. In **Figure 2b**, the *ha'* of *Allah* was worked by six or more cuts of a wheel.

Seal **Cat. 96** (**Fig. 3a**) is also of c. ninth-century AD date but composed of hematite (H of 5–6), a mineral softer than quartz. Moulding demonstrated that the angular inscription was also wheel-cut: the star (**Fig. 3b**) was formed by several cuts of a wheel.

In contrast, evidence was found for the use non-rotary engraving tools on the early Islamic bronze seal Cat. 38, c. ninth century AD (**Fig. 4a**). A mould of the letter *dāl* of *Aḥmad* (**Fig. 4b**) has features with angular profiles. The V-shaped profile at the left-hand side of the linear feature, across the bottom of the image, is consistent with the use of a thin flat chisel with an arrow-shaped point for marking this end. A second engraving tool with a more rounded edge was pushed obliquely

towards the mark, cutting away the bronze to create the linear component of this letter. The irregular grooves along the feature were made by imperfections on the cutting edge of a hard metal tool (the pitting apparent on the seal surface is due to corrosion). Hardened iron or steel tools would have been necessary, and are still used for engraving softer metals such as bronze (Wulff 1966: 35, fig. 3a 37; Untracht 1982: 289–92).

The green seal Cat. 390 is of intermediate c. fifteenth century or slightly later date (**Fig. 5a**) and probably from Iran or Central Asia. Jade imitators were popular as seal materials at this time and the seal is composed of saussurite (H of 6–7), a rock of about the same hardness as quartz. The moulded details of the linear and curved features of the inscription and central knot pattern (**Fig. 5b**) reflect the overall shallow depth of the intaglio. Nevertheless, the profiles along the moulded features are slightly convex, and regular grooves are present along their surfaces. These characteristics are consistent with wheel-cutting. The curvature of a short feature on the left-hand side of the knot pattern (**Fig. 5b**) at the join of two linear components indicates the use of a wheel c. 10 mm in diameter. The use of relatively large diameter wheels offers the benefit of faster rim speeds for a given rotational speed of the shaft: the linear speed at the rim is proportional to the diameter of the tool. Moreover, they can be expected to produce shallow features, resembling those engraved in the cursive style of this seal of intermediate



**Figure 3a,b** (a) Haematite seal Cat. 96, c. 9th century AD. (b) SEM image of a mould of a star, engraved using several cuts of a rotary wheel. Scale bar 0.5 mm



**Figure 4a,b** (a) Bronze seal Cat. 38, c. 9th century AD. (b) SEM image of the moulded details of the inscription: the angular profiles were worked with non-rotary tools. Scale bar 0.5 mm

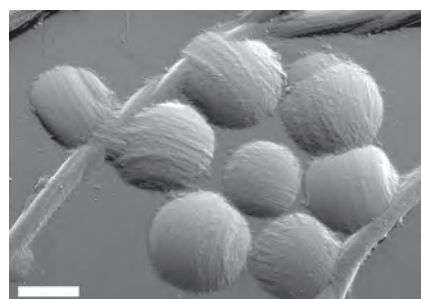
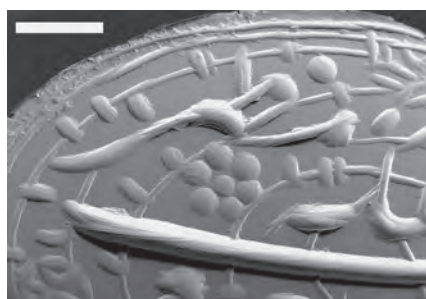




**Figure 5a–b** (a) Saussurite seal Cat. 390, c. 15th century AD (b) SEM image of a mould of the inscription and central knot pattern: the engraved features have shallow depths, suggesting the use of a relatively large engraving wheel, c. 10 mm in diameter. Scale bar 2.5 mm



**Figure 6a** Carnelian seal Cat. 452, AD 1757–8



**Figure 6b–d** (a) Carnelian seal Cat. 452, AD 1757–8. (b–d) SEM images of a mould of the cursive inscription, engraved with wheels in a range of shapes and sizes. Scale bars (b) 2.5 mm, (c–d) 0.5 mm

date. The diverging grooves at the curved ends of some letters suggest that these may have been finished with hand-held tools.

An example of the more detailed, later cursive style of engraving is given by the dated, AD 1757–8 Persian carnelian seal Cat. 452 (**Fig. 6a**). In contrast to the shallow depth of the intaglio in the saussurite seal above (**Fig. 5b**), the features forming the inscription and background of floral scrolls in the carnelian seal vary in shape and depth (**Fig. 6b and 6c**). Moulding demonstrated that the intaglio was finely engraved with rotary wheels in an extensive range of shapes and sizes. For instance, a tool with a spherical working surface c. 1 mm in diameter, similar to a modern burr, was employed for working flowers (**Fig. 6d**).

The intricate designs of the later cursive style of engraving, found on Safavid and Mughal seals from the 16th–18th centuries and later, are likely to have been executed using bow-driven jeweller's lathes of similar design to the one illustrated in the decorative border of an album made for the Mughal emperor Jahangir, c. 1620, and reproduced in **Fig. 7**. A minute wheel is barely discernable (on the right hand side of the image), attached to the end of a spindle, which is mounted horizontally between three upright bearings. With the string or thong of the bow wound around the spindle, the jeweller holds the bow in his right hand, working it backwards and forwards to rotate the wheel, probably in reciprocal motion. In his left hand, the jeweller holds the gemstone against the rotating wheel. An abrasive mix for use with the wheel was probably kept in the elegant pot illustrated nearby.

The design of the lathe (**Fig. 7**) is particularly interesting. The lathe is set on a low wooden table and the jeweller sits on a low stool with a broad square seat and elaborately-turned legs. The jeweller tucks his feet into his body. The use of low rigid furniture in traditional lapidary workshops in India is unusual. A pencil and ink drawing by John Lockwood Kipling of a lapidary in 1870 at Agra (which was reproduced by kind

permission of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, by Sax *et al.* 2007) and textual evidence (Chandra 1939 and references therein) show that it was customary during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in India to use bow-driven lapidary lathes on the ground. Craftsmen operated these lathes with both hands and steadied the base with one foot.

In documenting the traditional crafts of Persia during the mid-twentieth century, Wulff (1966:39) noted that the bow lathes of the turquoise cutters were set on benches, rather than the ground. This suggests that the design of the jeweller's lathe at the Mughal court may have been influenced by that of Persian lathes. Furthermore, during the decline of Safavid rule, noticeably in the 17th century, Persian artisans flowed to the East (Akbarnia and Leoni 2010: 32). It was inevitable that some Indian craftsmen picked up techniques from their Persian colleagues. The evidence presented by Skelton (1972) and Melikian-Chirvani (1999) showed that the lapidary expertise developed to work jade in Mughal India during the reign of Jahāngīr (1605–27) owed much to the Persian tradition. Also, the bowl on the right of the picture (**Fig. 7**) has the distinctive silhouette of bowls from the Khurasan region of eastern Iran.

Bow-driven lapidary lathes date from at least Hellenistic times (Charleston 1964), and have remained in use in the Middle East with few additional refinements if any until recent times. In contrast, the designs of lapidary lathes developed further in China and Europe. In China, lathes were mounted on upright wooden benches and treadle driven in reciprocal motion from at least the seventeenth century (E-Tu Zen Sun and Shiou-Chuan Sun 1966: 306; Sax *et al.* 2007b). Treadle-driven lathes were apparently first used in European lapidary workshops during the sixteenth century; by coupling these treadles to a crank and a flywheel, the spindle was rotated in one direction only (Charleston 1964). In both China and Europe, the lapidary's task was simplified by freeing both his hands to control the work more effectively.



**Figure 7** Miniature painting of a jeweller using a lathe to engrave a gemstone. The painting is from the border of an album made for the Mughal emperor Jahangir, c. 1620, and reproduced by kind permission of Naprstek Museum of Asian, African and American Cultures, Prague, Czech Republic

### Concluding remarks

The results of examining a small selection of Arabic and Persian seals indicate that traditional non-rotary metal-working techniques were employed to engrave a bronze seal of early Islamic date. In contrast, lathe-mounted rotary wheels were used for working the intaglios of stone seals during the early, intermediate and late Islamic periods. It is apparent that the particularly fine detail of the later cursive style of engraving was achieved with an exceptional range of wheels in various sizes and shapes. A miniature painting in an album made for the Mughal emperor Jahangir, c. 1620, suggests that the exacting process of working these elaborate designs was aided by the design of the lathe, which was probably Persian. In contrast to traditional Indian lathes used on the ground, the Mughal period lathe was firmly set on a low table, allowing the lapidary additional stability with greater flexibility for engraving.

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112	OA+ 14291
113	1878 12-20 196
114	OA+ 14372
115	1878 12-20 85
116	1878 12-20 91
117	1878 12-20 82
118	1866 12-29 133
119	1878 12-20 173
120	1880-3665
121	1878 12-20 202
122	OA+ 11463
123	1878 12-20 177
124	1878 12-20 81
125	1878 12-20 288
126	1878 12-20 263
127	1878 12-20 13
128	OA+ 14253
129	OA+ 14295
130	OA+ 14363
131	OA+ 13514
132	OA+ 14371
133	OA+ 14343
134	OA+ 14250
135	1878 12-20 69
136	1878 12-20 228
137	1878 12-20 138
138	1861 12-21 15
139	1893 4-26 165
140	1893 4-26 168
141	OA+ 14277
142	1943 10-9 5
143	OA+ 14347
144	1878 12-20 210
145	1878 12-20 264
146	1878 12-20 98
147	1878 12-20 96
148	1878 12-20 153
149	Marsden 13
150	OA+ 14293
151	1880-3653
152	1841 7-26 296
153	OA+ 13484
154	OA+ 14316

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155	1866 12-29 120
156	1878 12-20 213
157	1866 12-29 116
158	OA+ 14322
159	1866 12-29 105
160	1878 12-20 16
161	1878 12-20 203
162	1878 12-20 186
163	1878 12-20 179
164	OA+ 14311
165	1880-3650
166	1878 12-20 227
167	1878 12-20 101
168	1878 12-20 109
169	OA+ 14252
170	OA+ 7451
171	2001 8-6 1
172	2001 8-6 2
173	OA+ 14376
174	1878 12-20 137
175	1853 3-28 7
176	1866 12-29 106
177	1878 12-20 11
178	1866 12-29 122
179	1853 3-28 11
180	OA+ 13507
181	OA+ 14362
182	OA+ 14346
183	OA+ 7437
184	1866 12-29 130
185	1880-3651
186	1878 12-20 278
187	1878 12-20 199
188	1878 12-20 15
189	1878 12-20 195
190	OA+ 14251
191	1853 3-28 9
192	1866 12-29 111
193	1878 12-20 89
194	1878 12-20 107
195	OA+ 14374
196	1878 12-20 14
197	1878 12-20 197
198	1878 12-20 193
199	Marsden 6
200	1878 12-20 106
201	2003 10-21 1
202	Marsden 12
203	1880-3644
204	1853 3-28 10
205	1861 12-21 18
206	1878 12-20 104
207	1878 12-20 100
208	1878 12-20 79
209	1878 12-20 163

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
210	Marsden 4
211	1878 12-20 99
212	OA+ 14313
213	OA+ 13493
214	OA+ 14330
215	OA+ 13509
216	1878 12-20 175
217	78 12-20 200
218	1866 12-29 110
219	OA+ 14331
220	OA+ 11470
221	1878 12-20 164
222	1878 12-20 133
223	1878 12-20 172
224	1878 12-20 222
225	OA+ 14349
226	1878 12-20 296
227	1878 12-20 64
228	1878 12-20 121
229	OA+ 13491
230	1878 12-20 226
231	1878 12-20 18
232	P&E 1875 12-11 1
233	1878 12-20 130
234	1878 12-20 115
235	OA+ 14329
236	1878 12-20 171
237	1878 12-20 117
238	1878 12-20 116
239	1878 12-20 145
240	1878 12-20 142
241	1878 12-20 144
242	1880-3669
243	1878 12-20 118
244	1838 9-8 3
245	1878 12-20 194
246	1853 3-28 12
247	OA+ 14315
248	1853 3-28 16
249	1878 12-20 176
250	OA+ 14364
251	OA+ 14360
252	1866 12-29 135
253	1878 12-20 113
254	1878 12-20 112
255	OA+ 14338
256	OA+ 11471
257	1878 12-20 103
258	OA+ 14327
259	OA+ 14326
260	1943 10-9 4
261	OA+ 11466
262	1878 12-20 80
263	1878 12-20 86
264	1878 12-20 92
265	OA+ 14336
266	1878 12-20 74
267	1878 12-20 192
268	OA+ 13506
269	1878 12-20 108
270	1878 12-20 287
271	1878 12-20 141
272	1878 12-20 180
273	1880 3664
274	1878 12-20 114

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
275	OA+ 14284
276	1878 12-20 208
277	1880-3645
278	1878 12-20 198
279	1878 12-20 150
280	OA+ 14310
281	1853 3-28 6
282	1880-3654
283	1878 12-20 174
284	1878 12-20 154
285	Marsden 2
286	OA+ 14373
287	1878 12-20 306
288	1880-3636
289	OA+ 14279
290	OA+ 14290
291	OA+ 14351
292	OA+ 14323
293	1866 12-29 81
294	1943 10-9 1
295	1878 12-20 139
296	2007 60-01 14426
297	1878 12-20 155
298	OA+ 14309
299	1878 12-20 73
300	1878 12-20 190
301	1878 12-20 189
302	OA+ 14350
303	OA+ 13497
304	OA+ 13494
305	1878 12-20 146
306	1878 12-20 126
307	1880- 3647
308	OA+ 11467
309	1878 12-20 90
310	OA+ 14369
311	OA+ 14283
312	1878 12-20 135
313	1943 10-9 3
314	1880-3642
315	1878 12-20 156
316	Marsden 5
317	1878 12-20 250
318	1878 12-20 178
319	OA+ 11464
320	1878 12-20 168
321	OA+ 11472
322	OA+ 14370
323	Marsden 3
324	OA+ 14367
325	1838 9-8 4
326	1943 10-9 13
327	1892 3-28 94
328	1878 12-20 72
329	1838 9-8 2
330	1878 12-20 214
331	1878 12-20 83
332	1878 12-20 221
333	1878 12-20 125
334	1878 12-20 122
335	OA+ 14312
336	1878 12-20 165
337	OA+ 14335
338	OA+ 14321
339	OA+ 14381

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
340	1866 12-29 91
341	1866 12-29 100
342	1853 3-28 8
343	1878 12-20 225
344	OA+ 14308
345	OA+ 14314
346	1878 12-20 220
347	OA+ 14288
348	1878 12-20 219
349	1878 12-20 162
350	1878 12-20 161
351	OA+ 14292
352	1878 12-20 159
353	1878 12-20 160
354	1878 12-20 191
355	OA+ 7448
356	1866 12-29 112
357	1866 12-29 99
358	1880-3635
359	OA+ 14254
360	1893 7-15 11
361	OA+ 14254
362	OA+ 14352
363	1878 12-20 95
364	1880-3563
365	1878 12-20 305
366	1930 10-14 1
367	1854 4-1 23
368	1878 12-20 149
369	1878 12-20 249
370	1880-3639
371	1893 4-26 167
372	1878 12-20 184
373	1878 12-20 183
374	1921 2-20 26
375	1878 12-20 275
376	1878 12-20 232
377	1880- 3638
378	1878 12-20 230
379	OA+ 14265
380	1878 12-20 231
381	1880-3656
382	1878 12-20 229
383	OA+ 14267
384	OA+ 14299
385	OA+ 14258
386	OA+ 14259
387	OA+ 14285
388	1878 12-20 233
389	OA+ 14266
390	OA+ 14256
391	1878 12-20 238
392	1878 12-20 248
393	1872 6-4 973
394	1878 12-20 237
395	1878 12-20 282
396	1878 12-20 241
397	1878 12-20 259
398	1878 12-20 235
399	1878 12-20 244
400	1878 12-20 243
401	1878 12-20 234
402	1878 12-20 279
403	1878 12-20 260
404	1866 12-29 128

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405	1878 12-20 247
406	1866 12-29 127
407	1853 3-28 31
408	1878 12-20 258
409	1878 12-20 300
410	1878 12-20 299
411	1878 12-20 274
412	1866 12-29 86
413	1878 12-20 21
414	1866 12-29 83
415	1878 12-20 276
416	1878 12-20 240
417	1866 12-29 108
418	OA+ 14303
419	1878 12-20 283
420	1878 12-20 257
421	OA+ 14377
422	1866 12-29 109
423	1866 12-29 82
424	1878 12-20 308
425	1866 12-29 125
426	1866 12-29 104
427	1878 12-20 286
428	1878 12-20 302
429	1878 12-20 301
430	1866 12-29 131
431	OA+ 14272
432	OA+ 14281
433	OA+ 14274
434	1866 12-29 107
435	1878 12-20 236
436	Sloane 19
437	OA+ 14375
438	1893 4-26 174
439	1878 12-20 271
440	1878 12-20 20
441	OA+ 1337
442	OA+ 14273
443	Sloane 23
444	1878 12-20 245
445	OA+ 14264
446	OA+ 14239
447	1992 1-28 10
448	1992 1-28 35
449	1992 1-28 24
450	1889 7-6 76
451	1866 12-29 103
452	OA+ 14378
453	OA+ 14262
454	OA+ 14305
455	1878 12-20 280
456	1853 3-28 37
457	1878 12-20 253
458	1866 12-29 87
459	1866 12-29 92
460	OA+ 14255
461	1943 10-9 14
462	1866 12-29 126
463	1985 7-13 46
464	1878 12-20 284
465	1893 4-26 169
466	1866 12-29 95
467	1878 12-20 256
468	1878 12-20 246
469	1985 7-13 48



Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
470	1878 12-20 239
471	1866 12-29 94
472	1949 10-13 1
473	1989 3-13 1
474	1994 8-5 7
475	1878 12-20 273
476	1878 12-20 291
477	1878 12-20 303
478	1878 12-20 24
479	1893 4-26 170
480	1878 12-20 290
481	1878 12-20 289
482	1994 8-5 8
483	1878 12-20 270
484	1878 12-20 285
485	1878 12-20 22
486	1878 12-20 25
487	1878 12-20 255
488	1878 12-20 272
489	1878 12-20 269
490	1878 12-20 294
491	1878 12-20 297
492	1994 8-5 14
493	1878 12-20 251
494	1861 6-28 31
495	1893 4-26 171
496	1878 12-20 254
497	OA+ 14275
498	1936 3-19 2
499	1878 12-20 304
500	1878 12-20 298
501	1893 4-26 172
502	1893 4-26 173
503	1992 1-28 38
504	1994 8-5 6
505	1994 8-5 17
506	1994 8-5 5
507	1994 8-5 15
508	1994 8-5 3
509	1866 12-29 88
510	1878 12-20 281
511	1866 12-29 93
512	1878 12-20 242
513	1878 12-20 252
514	1994 8-5 13
515	1992 1-28 39
516	OA+ 14241
517	1878 12-20 277
518	1880-3640
519	1866 12-29 89
520	OA+ 14257
521	1878 12-20 26
522	1866 12-29 102
523	1992 1-28 33
524	1992 1-28 37

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
525	1992 1-28 3
526	1992 1-28 29
527	1992 1-28 5
528	1994 8-5 4
529	1992 1-28 17
530	1992 1-28 8
531	1992 1-28 12
532	1992 1-28 27
533	1992 1-28 30
534	1992 1-28 2
535	1992 1-28 36
536	1992 1-28 16
537	1992 1-28 20
538	1992 1-28 26
539	1992 1-28 14
540	1992 1-28 6
541	1992 1-28 34
542	1992 1-28 13
543	1992 1-28 22
544	1992 1-28 15
545	1992 1-28 25
546	1992 1-28 9
547	1992 1-28 4
548	1992 1-28 18
549	1992 1-28 1
550	1992 1-28 11
551	1992 1-28 23
552	1992 1-28 21
553	1994 8-5 11
554	1994 8-5 9
555	1992 1-28 32
556	1992 1-28 19
557	1992 1-28 7
558	1992 1-28 28
559	1992 1-28 31
560	1903 11-25 11
561	1903 11-25 5
562	1889 10-18 2
563	1853 3-28 44
564	1853 3-28 51
565	1853 3-28 58
566	1903 11-25 6
567	1903 11-25 3
568	1903 11-25 2
569	1853 3-28 24
570	1903 11-25 9
571	1893 4-25 176
572	1903 11-25 8
573	1853 3-28 56
574	1853 3-28 57
575	1903 11-25 12
576	1893 7-26 177
577	1853 3-28 68
578	1853 3-28 57
579	1853 3-28 42

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
580	1903 11-25 10
581	OA+ 14300
582	OA+ 14379
583	1853 3-28 17
584	1853 3-28 46
585	1853 3-28 52
586	1853 3-28 19
587	1853 3-28 33
588	1853 3-28 26
589	OA+ 14304
590	1853 3-28 63
591	1853 3-28 32
592	1853 3-28 34
593	1853 3-28 25
594	1853 3-28 72
595	1853 3-28 38
596	1853 3-28 55
597	1853 3-28 23
598	1853 3-28 61
599	1853 3-28 28
600	1853 3-28 59
601	1853 3-28 39
602	1853 3-28 41
603	1853 3-28 35
604	1903 11-16 11
605	1853 3-28 40
606	1853 3-28 50
607	1853 3-28 66
608	1853 3-28 60
609	1853 3-28 18
610	1853 3-28 69
611	1853 3-28 67
612	1853 3-28 29
613	1853 3-28 27
614	1853 3-28 30
615	1893 4-26 163
616	1893 4-26 175
617	1853 3-28 47
618	1853 3-28 65
619	1903 11-16 12
620	OA+ 14286
621	OA+ 14263
622	1903 11-25 5
623	1903 11-25 4
624	1970 3-9 1
625	OA+ 1340
626	1996 3-25 1
627	1992 6-26 1
628	OA+ 13941
629	1892 2-16 24
630	OA+ 13941
631	1994 8-5 20
632	OA+ 14380
633	1994 8-5 18
634	1994 8-5 19

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Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
A1	1867 12-19 1
A2	1893 2-5 110
A3	1943 10-9 7
A4	1878 12-20 5
A5	OA+ 11430
A6	OA+ 11451
A7	1878 12-20 40
A8	1837 4-13 132
A9	2003 10-21 2
A10	1861 6-28 34
A11	OA+ 13499
A12	1893 2-5 109
A13	1894 5-20 12
A14	Sloane 9
A15	Sloane 6
A16	Sloane 8
A17	Sloane 3
A18	Sloane 14
A19	Sloane 7
A20	OA+ 1366
A21	1943 10-9 11
A22	Sloane 21
A23	OA+ 13932
A24	1890 11-10 5
A25	1878 12-20 38
A26	1866 12-29 84
A27	1853 3-28 1
A28	Sloane 10
A29	OA+ 11450
A30	1878 12-20 8
A31	Sloane 17
A32	1883 12-11 1
A33	OA+ 1334
A34	1923 2-3 1
A35	1890 11-10 4
A36	1878 12-20 35
A37	1878 12-20 33
A38	1878 12-20 32
A39	OA+ 11433
A40	1987 11-19 2
A41	1878 12-20 10
A42	1878 12-20 3
A43	1878 12-20 37
A44	1878 12-20 43
A45	1878 12-20 41
A46	Sloane 11
A47	1943 10-9 10
A48	Marsden 9
A49	1866 12-29 113
A50	1878 12-20 46

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
A51	1878 12-20 45
A52	1878 12-20 44
A53	1878 12-20 47
A54	1878 12-20 48
A55	1878 12-20 42
A56	1878 12-20 39
A57	1866 12-29 114
A58	Sloane 12
A59	Sloane 18
A60	1878 12-20 51
A61	OA+ 14317
A62	1878 12-20 36
A63	1878 12-20 31
A64	1866 12-29 90
A65	1853 3-28 3
A66	1878 12-20 6
A67	1878 12-20 34
A68	1866 12-29 97
A69	1866 12-29 96
A70	1878 12-20 27
A71	1878 12-20 1
A72	1880-3655
A73	1878 12-20 2
A74	1866 12-29 98
A75	OA+ 1422
A76	1878 12-20 7
A77	1878 12-20 4
A78	Sloane 1
A79	1890 11-10 6
A80	1890 11-10 7
A81	1843 6-9 23
A82	1920 81, OA+ 7431
A83	1853 3-28 2
A84	Sloane 13
A85	1893 2-5 108
A86	Sloane 15
A87	OA+ 11434
A88	OA+ 1364
A89	1881 9-9 11
A90	OA+ 7452
A91	OA+ 7435
A92	C&M 1869 8-3 1
A93	C&M 1875 6-6 28
A94	C&M OR 0230
A95	C&M OR 0229
A96	C&M 1877 7-6 134
A97	C&M 1921 10-14 52
A98	C&M 1921 10-14 55
A99	C&M OR 0231
A100	C&M 849 11-21 359
A101	C&M OR 0232
A102	C&M 1921 10-14 56
A103	C&M 1849 11-21 358
A104	C&M 1875 5-2 155
A105	1994 9-15 888
A106	1866 12-29 85
A107	1872 5-24 16
A108	1880-3637
A109	1994 8-5 12
A110	Sloane 4

Cat. no.	BM reg. no.
A111	1878 12-20 9
A112	1903 11-16 10
A113	1866 12-29 101
A114	Sloane 5
A115	1843 6-9 2
A116	1989 3-11 1
A117	1903 11-10 9
A118	1878 12-20 68
A119	1891 4-18 42
A120	1893 2-5 107
A121	1893 2-5 96
A122	1893 2-5 106
A123	1893 2-5 101
A124	1893 2-15 2
A125	1893 2-15 3
A126	OA+ 13423
A127	1893 2-15 1
A128	1994 8-5 2
A129	1994 8-5 1
A130	OA+ 14339
A131	OA+ 14341
A132	1887 1-15 1
A133	1881 9-9 9
A134	1881 9-9 10
A135	C&M 1917 5-4
A136	1883 10-31 19
A137	OA+ 11435
A138	1893 4-26 166
A139	Marsden 7
A140	1867 7-9 7
A141	OA+ 14368
A142	1943 10-9 8
A143	1853 3-28 73
A144	1874 8-5 62
A145	1853 3-28 4
A146	Marsden 8
A147	OA+ 14238
A148	1863 10-13 18
A149	OA+ 14278
A150	1874 5-1 2
A151	1861 12-21 3
A152	1861 12-21 19
A153	OA+ 14168
A154	OA+ 14342
A155	OA+ 13496
A156	Marsden 10
A157	OA+ 13505
A158	1819 7-9 6
A159	1878 12-20 127
A160	Marsden 1
A161	OA+ 14325
A162	1883 10-31 17
A163	1883 10-31 16
A164	1878 12-20 28
A165	1878 12-20 29
A166	1853 3-28 89
A167	OA+ 7436
A168	C&M 1991 7-27 4
A169	OA+ 13500
A170	1921 5-11 1



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Museum reg. no.	Cat. no.
1878 12-20 218	53
1819 7-9 6	A158
1837 4-13 132	A8
1838 9-8 2	329
1838 9-8 3	244
1838 9-8 4	325
1841 7-26 295	58
1841 7-26 296	152
1843 6-9 2	A115
1843 6-9 23	A81
1853 3-28 16	248
1853 3-28 21	79
1853 3-28 1	A27
1853 3-28 10	204
1853 3-28 11	179
1853 3-28 12	246
1853 3-28 13	71
1853 3-28 14	82
1853 3-28 15	41
1853 3-28 17	583
1853 3-28 18	609
1853 3-28 19	586
1853 3-28 2	A83
1853 3-28 23	597
1853 3-28 24	569
1853 3-28 25	593
1853 3-28 26	588
1853 3-28 27	613
1853 3-28 28	599
1853 3-28 29	612
1853 3-28 3	A65
1853 3-28 30	614
1853 3-28 31	407
1853 3-28 32	591
1853 3-28 33	587
1853 3-28 34	592
1853 3-28 35	603
1853 3-28 37	456
1853 3-28 38	595
1853 3-28 39	601
1853 3-28 4	A145
1853 3-28 40	605
1853 3-28 41	602

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1853 3-28 42	579
1853 3-28 44	563
1853 3-28 46	584
1853 3-28 47	617
1853 3-28 50	606
1853 3-28 51	564
1853 3-28 52	585
1853 3-28 55	596
1853 3-28 56	573
1853 3-28 57	574
1853 3-28 57	578
1853 3-28 58	565
1853 3-28 59	600
1853 3-28 6	281
1853 3-28 60	608
1853 3-28 61	598
1853 3-28 63	590
1853 3-28 65	618
1853 3-28 66	607
1853 3-28 67	611
1853 3-28 68	577
1853 3-28 69	610
1853 3-28 7	175
1853 3-28 72	594
1853 3-28 73	A143
1853 3-28 8	342
1853 3-28 89	A166
1853 3-28 9	191
1854 4-1 23	367
1861 12-21 15	138
1861 12-21 18	205
1861 12-21 19	A152
1861 12-21 3	A151
1861 12-21 9	91
1861 6-28 31	494
1861 6-28 34	A10
1861 6-28 36	4
1863 10-13 18	A148
1866 12-29 81	293
1866 12-29 92	459
1866 12-29 100	341
1866 12-29 101	A113
1866 12-29 102	522
1866 12-29 103	451
1866 12-29 104	426
1866 12-29 105	159
1866 12-29 106	176
1866 12-29 107	434
1866 12-29 108	417
1866 12-29 109	422
1866 12-29 110	218

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1866 12-29 111	192
1866 12-29 112	356
1866 12-29 113	A49
1866 12-29 114	A57
1866 12-29 115	42
1866 12-29 116	157
1866 12-29 118	68
1866 12-29 119	52
1866 12-29 120	155
1866 12-29 122	178
1866 12-29 123	59
1866 12-29 124	46
1866 12-29 125	425
1866 12-29 126	462
1866 12-29 127	406
1866 12-29 128	404
1866 12-29 130	184
1866 12-29 131	430
1866 12-29 133	118
1866 12-29 135	252
1866 12-29 82	423
1866 12-29 83	414
1866 12-29 84	A26
1866 12-29 85	A106
1866 12-29 86	412
1866 12-29 87	458
1866 12-29 88	509
1866 12-29 89	519
1866 12-29 90	A64
1866 12-29 91	340
1866 12-29 93	511
1866 12-29 94	471
1866 12-29 95	466
1866 12-29 96	A69
1866 12-29 97	A68
1866 12-29 98	A74
1866 12-29 99	357
1867 12-19 1	A1
1867 7-9 7	A140
1872 5-24 16	A107
1872 6-4 973	393
1874 5-1 2	A150
1874 8-5 62	A144
1878 12-20 125	333
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1878 12-20 209	108
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1878 12-20 296	226
1878 12-20 47	A53
1878 12-20 48	A54
1878 12-20 64	227
1878 12-20 73	299
1878 12-20 98	146
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1878 12-20 100	207
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1878 12-20 114	274
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1878 12-20 122	334
1878 12-20 123	66
1878 12-20 124	77
1878 12-20 126	306
1878 12-20 127	A159
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1878 12-20 13	127
1878 12-20 130	233
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1878 12-20 133	222
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1878 12-20 139	295	1878 12-20 195	189	1878 12-20 254	496	1878 12-20 34	A67
1878 12-20 14	196	1878 12-20 196	113	1878 12-20 255	487	1878 12-20 35	A36
1878 12-20 141	271	1878 12-20 197	197	1878 12-20 256	467	1878 12-20 36	A62
1878 12-20 142	240	1878 12-20 198	278	1878 12-20 257	420	1878 12-20 37	A43
1878 12-20 143	47	1878 12-20 199	187	1878 12-20 258	408	1878 12-20 38	A25
1878 12-20 144	241	1878 12-20 2	A73	1878 12-20 259	397	1878 12-20 39	A56
1878 12-20 145	239	1878 12-20 20	440	1878 12-20 26	521	1878 12-20 4	A77
1878 12-20 146	305	1878 12-20 202	121	1878 12-20 260	403	1878 12-20 40	A7
1878 12-20 147	100	1878 12-20 203	161	1878 12-20 261	50	1878 12-20 41	A45
1878 12-20 149	368	1878 12-20 206	37	1878 12-20 262	90	1878 12-20 42	A55
1878 12-20 15	188	1878 12-20 208	276	1878 12-20 263	126	1878 12-20 43	A44
1878 12-20 150	279	1878 12-20 21	413	1878 12-20 264	145	1878 12-20 44	A52
1878 12-20 153	148	1878 12-20 210	144	1878 12-20 265	104	1878 12-20 45	A51
1878 12-20 154	284	1878 12-20 211	40	1878 12-20 266	92	1878 12-20 46	A50
1878 12-20 155	297	1878 12-20 213	156	1878 12-20 268	33	1878 12-20 5	A4
1878 12-20 156	315	1878 12-20 214	330	1878 12-20 269	489	1878 12-20 51	A60
1878 12-20 159	352	1878 12-20 216	84	1878 12-20 27	A70	1878 12-20 6	A66
1878 12-20 16	160	1878 12-20 217	54	1878 12-20 270	483	1878 12-20 68	A118
1878 12-20 160	353	1878 12-20 219	348	1878 12-20 272	488	1878 12-20 69	135
1878 12-20 161	350	1878 12-20 22	485	1878 12-20 273	475	1878 12-20 7	A76
1878 12-20 162	349	1878 12-20 220	346	1878 12-20 274	411	1878 12-20 72	328
1878 12-20 163	209	1878 12-20 221	332	1878 12-20 276	415	1878 12-20 74	266
1878 12-20 164	221	1878 12-20 224	32	1878 12-20 277	517	1878 12-20 75	39
1878 12-20 165	336	1878 12-20 225	343	1878 12-20 278	186	1878 12-20 78	38
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1878 12-20 168	320	1878 12-20 228	136	1878 12-20 28	A164	1878 12-20 8	A30
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1878 12-20 170	98	1878 12-20 230	378	1878 12-20 281	510	1878 12-20 81	124
1878 12-20 171	236	1878 12-20 231	380	1878 12-20 282	395	1878 12-20 82	117
1878 12-20 172	223	1878 12-20 232	376	1878 12-20 283	419	1878 12-20 83	331
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1878 12-20 177	123	1878 12-20 237	394	1878 12-20 29	A165	1878 12-20 9	A111
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1878 12-20 183	373	1878 12-20 243	400	1878 12-20 299	410	1878 12-20 95	363
1878 12-20 184	372	1878 12-20 244	399	1878 12-20 3	A42	1878 12-20 96	147
1878 12-20 186	162	1878 12-20 245	444	1878 12-20 300	409	1878 12-20 99	211
1878 12-20 188	78	1878 12-20 246	468	1878 12-20 301	429	1880 3664	273
1878 12-20 189	301	1878 12-20 247	405	1878 12-20 303	477	1880- 3638	377
1878 12-20 19	93	1878 12-20 248	392	1878 12-20 304	499	1880- 3641	73
1878 12-20 190	300	1878 12-20 249	369	1878 12-20 305	365	1880- 3647	307
1878 12-20 191	354	1878 12-20 25	486	1878 12-20 306	287	1880-3563	364
1878 12-20 192	267	1878 12-20 251	493	1878 12-20 31	A63	1880-3635	358



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1880-3640	518	1893 4-26 163	615	1983 9-17 1	15	1992 1-28 39	515
1880-3642	314	1893 4-26 165	139	1983 9-17 10	29	1992 1-28 4	547
1880-3643	67	1893 4-26 166	A138	1983 9-17 11	22	1992 1-28 5	527
1880-3644	203	1893 4-26 168	140	1983 9-17 12	30	1992 1-28 6	540
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1880-3649	106	1893 4-26 170	479	1983 9-17 14	27	1992 1-28 8	530
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1880-3652	96	1893 4-26 173	502	1983 9-17 5	20	1994 8-5 1	A129
1880-3653	151	1893 4-26 174	438	1983 9-17 5	25	1994 8-5 11	553
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1880-3663	94	1903 11-10 9	A117	1985 7-13 46	463	1994 8-5 17	505
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1893 2-5 106	A122	1943 10-9 3	313	1992 1-28 30	533	C&M 1921 10-14 55	A98
1893 2-5 107	A120	1943 10-9 4	260	1992 1-28 31	559	C&M 1921 10-14 56	A102
1893 2-5 108	A85	1943 10-9 5	142	1992 1-28 32	555	C&M 1983 9-17 2	10
1893 2-5 109	A12	1943 10-9 7	A3	1992 1-28 33	523	C&M 1991 7-27 4	A168
1893 2-5 110	A2	1943 10-9 8	A142	1992 1-28 34	541	C&M 1875 6-6 28	A93
1893 2-5 96	A121	1943 10-9 9	34	1992 1-28 35	448	C&M 1877 7-6 134	A96

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C&M OR 0229	A95
C&M OR 0230	A94
C&M OR 0231	A99
C&M 1849 11-21 358	A103
C&M 1849 11-21 359	A100
C&M 1869 8-3 1	A92
C&M OR 0232	A101
CM 1984 6-12 4	6
CM 1984 6-12 5	7
CM 1984 6-12 6	5
CM 1999 2-5 1	2
CM 1922 9-8 1	9
Marsden 1	A160
Marsden 10	A156
Marsden 12	202
Marsden 13	149
Marsden 2	285
Marsden 3	323
Marsden 4	210
Marsden 5	316
Marsden 6	199
Marsden 7	A139
Marsden 8	A146
Marsden 9	A48
OA + 11462	103
OA + 11470	220
OA + 11471	256
OA + 11472	321
OA + 13497	303
OA + 13514	131
OA + 14269	111
OA + 14272	431
OA + 14276	110
OA + 14284	275
OA + 14291	112
OA + 14297	76
OA + 14306	51
OA + 14308	344
OA + 14315	247
OA + 14317	A61
OA + 14321	338
OA + 14326	259
OA + 14329	235
OA + 14337	80
OA + 14343	133
OA + 14345	64
OA + 14349	225
OA + 14363	130
OA + 14364	250
OA + 14369	310
OA + 14370	322

Museum reg. no.	Cat. no.
OA 13484	153
OA 14252	169
OA 14293	150
OA 14311	164
OA 14316	154
OA 14322	158
OA 1861 6-28 35	3
OA 1893 11-11 1	1
OA+ + 13509	215
OA+ 11433	A39
OA+ 11434	A87
OA+ 11451	A6
OA+ 11463	122
OA+ 11464	319
OA+ 11466	261
OA+ 11467	308
OA+ 1337	441
OA+ 13485	36
OA+ 13491	229
OA+ 13493	213
OA+ 13499	A11
OA+ 13506	268
OA+ 13507	180
OA+ 1364	A88
OA+ 1422	A75
OA+ 14250	134
OA+ 14251	190
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OA+ 14257	520
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OA+ 14263	621
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OA+ 14274	433
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OA+ 14281	432
OA+ 14285	387
OA+ 14286	620
OA+ 14288	347
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OA+ 14299	384
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OA+ 14303	418

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OA+ 7451	170
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OA+ 11435	A137
OA+ 11450	A29
OA+ 11465	44
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OA+ 1340	625
OA+ 13423	A126
OA+ 13494	304
OA+ 13496	A155
OA+ 13500	A169
OA+ 13505	A157
OA+ 1366	A20
OA+ 13932	A23
OA+ 13941	628

Museum reg. no.	Cat. no.
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OA+ 14264	445
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OA+ 14267	383
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OA+ 14323	292
OA+ 14325	A161
OA+ 14341	A131
OA+ 14342	A154
OA+ 14360	251
OA+ 14367	324
OA+ 14380	632
OA+ 7435	A91
OA+ 7436	A167
OA+ 7453	65
OR 5288	26
OR 5289	12
OR 5290	16
P&E 1875 12-11 1	232
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Sloane 9	A14
Sloane 1	A78
Sloane 10	A28
Sloane 12	A58
Sloane 13	A84
Sloane 14	A18
Sloane 15	A86
Sloane 17	A31
Sloane 19	436
Sloane 21	A22
Sloane 23	443
Sloane 3	A17
Sloane 4	A110
Sloane 5	A114
Sloane 6	A15
Sloane 7	A19
Sloane 8	A16
Sloane18	A59

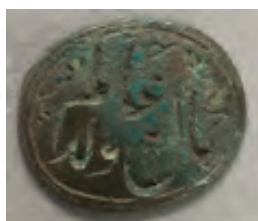


# Corrections to the first edition

Since the catalogue was published in 2011, some mistakes, or alternative readings, have emerged which include those cited below. I am grateful to Abdullah Ghouchani and to Muhammad Javad Jeddi for pointing these out to me. This page also includes some additional information and new publications have been incorporated into the bibliography. I am extremely grateful to Sarah Faulks for overseeing this new edition and for putting it online.

I was very sad to learn of the death in 2011 of Dr Alexander (Sandy) Morton who helped me so much with the Persian material soon after publication of the catalogue.

Cat. no.	Correction
65	al-Riwād b. Jabala
73	Suhail b. Shādān
81	‘Abdallāh b. Badr al-Maṣrī
124	Muḥammad b. Shādān
133	Muḥammad b. al-Mudhafar
171	Fā’iq b. Muḥammad trusts in God
211	<i>Mā kunta na’ima al-‘abd(al-‘ibād)</i> You were the best of servants
288	‘And other gains there are which are not in your power...’ ( <i>wa ākhiratī lam taqdirū ‘alayhā</i> ) (Qur’ān 48:21; 25:33)
365	The sinner ( <i>al-mudhnib</i> ) Muhammad Zaman
425	His servant ( <i>‘abduhu</i> ) Ahmad Haidar
440	The manifestation of the kindness ( <i>lutf</i> ) of God, Khalīl
444	Shāh Ghulām
449	Aga Mirza follower of the religion of the Prophet ( <i>Pe-ruye din-e nabi</i> )
452	Kindness is a sign of the One God, oh God ( <i>lutfkeh mazhar-e ilāhi yā rabb</i> ). Hajji Sayyid Muḥammad. Ottoman style
453	‘Azīz Bek
455	Insert <i>ze</i> (of) before Muḥammad
460	His servant Murṭb. Ḥasan 1157
467	Muḥammad Riḍā ( <i>alif</i> )
478	His servant Khāqānī
491	Date: 1206/1791-2
495	Oh God forgive our sin. For the poor Tufail. ( <i>ya rabb ginah ma bakhsh li-Tufail faqir</i> )
496	Side B: His servant ( <i>‘abduhu</i> ) the supplicant ( <i>al-rājī</i> ) Sīrīn
519	Insert <i>wa</i> (and) before <i>muhib</i> (the one who loves)
521	Insert <i>ze</i> (of) before Muḥammad
544	al-Tabātabā’ī (insert <i>hamza</i> in the Arabic)
550	Nāṣir Suhrābī 1332 OR Suhrāb Basrī
553	al-Tabātabā’ī (insert <i>hamza</i> in the Arabic)
558	He is the highest of the high ( <i>Huwa al-‘alī akthar al-‘alā’</i> )
567	Ḥikmat Yābkhān, humble servant of Aḥmad Shāh Bahādurī
574	Number and image incorrect. Number is 1853 3-28 54 and correct image illustrated below



Cat. no.	Correction
A19	Insert <i>waw</i> (and) before <i>yusabih al-ra'd</i> ('and the thunder sounds...') (Qur'ān 13:13)
A32	Margin, last line: O You who lifts up steps ( <i>yā raftī'al-darajāt</i> )
A39	Last line: O Pardoner ( <i>ya Ghaffār</i> )
A51	Side A. I believe in God and His texts ( <i>amantu billah wa kutubu</i> )
A52	Side B line 3: I believe in God and messengers ( <i>wa ānī wāthiq billah wa rusuluhu</i> )
A53	Side B line 1 I believe in God and messengers ( <i>amantu billah wa rusuluhu</i> )
A164	Side B 'O you assembly of jinns and men...' ( <i>ya ma'shar al-jinn wa'l insan....</i> (Qur'ān 55:33))
	Page 13, fig. 2: The carnelian seal from Ras al-Ḥadd is in the National Museum of Oman, Muscat, reference: DA12279